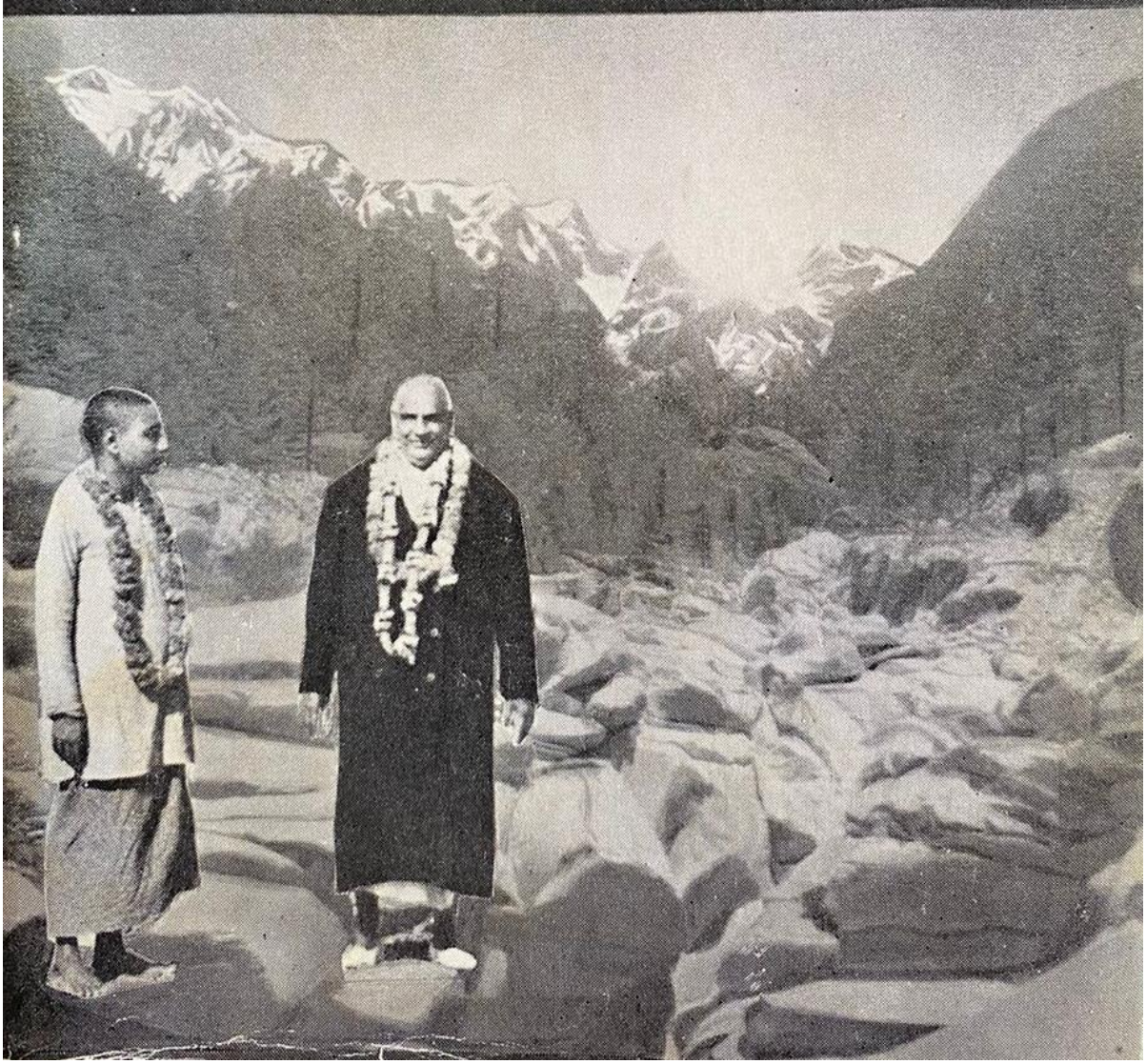
ANCIENT RELIGION
A NEW LOOK

BY SWAMI VENKATESANANDA



Swami Venkatesananda - Crest Jewel

Born on 2nd January 1922 in Tanjore District, the Divine child Parthasarathy developed qualities like Druva and Prahlada. He joined the monastic order in 1945 as Swami Venkatesananda under the discipleship of the World renowned Saint Swami Sivanandaji of Rishikesh. Indeed there is no higher compliment that a Guru can bestow on his disciple than what Siva has said of this illustrious aspirant : "Crest Jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my work - will I ever see any one shine brighter than he, Swami Venkatesanandaji ? Surely none have I seen so far." To Gurudev Sivananda, in his Jnana Yagna, Swami Venkatesananda had been a tower of strength. His capacity for untiring work is flabbergasting, his devotion to Guru matchless and adherence to the principles of Divine Life is simply awe-inspiring and worthy of emulation.

In 1961, the Swami with the Blessings of his Gurudev started on his foreign tour to propogate the teachings of his Gurudev. After a short tour of West Australia he went to Africa. From Israel in the North to Cape Town in the South, Madagascar and Mauritius he has captured the hearts of one and all and has brought people of all Faiths together under one common Goal.

ANCIENT RELIGION

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SWAMI VENKATESANANDA

1st August 1959

Sri Sabnani
Celombo

Religion and life are inseparable. Religion is an integral part of mans life. It is the foundation for code of conduct necessary for to making of a better man and a better society.

The task of Religion is to make men and nation True, Just, Honest, Dious, Compassionate and dioine. Practise Religion and become divine.

May Lord Bless you.

Sivananda

That man kills his soul who, having procured the exceptionally fit vessel of a human body, the source of all blessings and a most rare boon, yet easily obtained and piloted by a preceptor and propelled by a favourable wind in the shape of Myself-fails to cross the ocean of mundane existence.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATHAM
(11-20-16.)

Life without religion is worse than death.

SWAMI SIVANANDA

The religious feeling of a scientist takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.

PROF. ALBERT EINSEIN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Divine Will of Sri Satgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj alone has taken this form.

Mrs. Pamela Eriksson rendered invaluable help putting this into proper shape. Miss Elizabeth Roinski prepared the manuscript.

Mother Shanti Cornelius of Cape Town (South Africa) whose selfless and untiring work alone made this publication possible. To her, to her co-workers in the Cape Town Meditation Group, to Mrs. Eriksson and Miss Roinski-our greatful thanks.

We are also grateful to Miss Helma Jades of Johannesburg whose magnanimous contribution has enabled us to print an extra thousand copies of this book.

First Edition, 2,000, October 1966.

Part of the many devotees in Cape Town who subscribed to the printing of this book, in conjunction with the Laya Yoga Meditation Group and MOTHER SHANTI.

INTRODUCTION

History and to some extent science suffer from paranoia. They belittle all that comes within their grasp and deny that which is beyond. The ideas and the ideals of the East were contemptuously labelled primitive, pagan, heathen and foolishly unsound and superstitious till a few years ago. Many were the self-appointed redeemers of the lost soul of the East! Till a few great men whose soul was awake realised a marvellous truth.

The sun rises in the East. For the light, people turn to the East. And "the three wise men came from the East", too. The religions of the world had their origin in the East. Whilst the earthly power of the West might for a time challenge, ridicule and oppress

the overwhelming spiritual wisdom of the East, eventually the latter not only survives but conquers its own oppressor, for this wisdom uses not weapons but love to win the opponent over.

The flesh decays. Weapons rust. Wealth is reduced to dust. Empires crumble. The life-and-death struggles of heroes are dismissed with a few brief sentences in a history book. The earth's crust has borne with equal indifference the stamping foot of the tyrant and the dancing feet of the jubilant, and has opened a small pore to receive both.

This drama is necessary, very much so. Without it, the spirit that lies asleep in the human breast would not awake, but it is that spirit that ultimately endures. The East proves it again and again.

When crowns rolled in the dust of Europe, and when Western pre-Christian civilisation and religious faith were consigned to oblivion, the East was awake, and she is still awake. Today wise men of the West recognise that matter decays and spirit endures. They see in the Spirit the purpose and meaning of Life. More and more of the scientists and philosophers of the world admit openly that the present fashion of exalting material values over the spiritual is disastrous.

When they see that through all the vicissitudes of political upheaval, natural and national calamities, changing physical and mental climates, the Indian spirit has managed to survive, they legitimately pose the question:
"What is her secret?" The answer is simple. "Religion".

Religion does not "belong" to India. The fundamental scriptures of the Indian pray for the welfare of all beings, repeatedly assert that they are for the Human Being. "Hindu" is a foreigner-conferred title; and if Indians use it still, it is only because "What's in a name, anyway!" In fact, the Hindu does not recognise the multiplicity of religion.

The spirit of religion is fundamental to the soul of Man. You may stick any label on it or call yourself a "free thinker"-it is the spirit that is important. The truly religious Indian clung to that spirit. When he was questioned by others, he confessed that his

was an "ancient religion" (Sanatana Dharma). Sanatana Dharma also meant to him the path which led him to the Eternal, which immortalised him or revealed to him his own essential immortal nature (all of which were covered by the word sanatana).

Without sacrificing this spirit, the Indian was ever ready to adapt its formulations to suit changing conditions. He has never yielded without resistance! The resistance he offers is like a filter which allows only Truth to pass through. In the preservation of the religious spirit, the Indian often resorts to internal spring-cleaning tactics, generating curative fevers within his own body spiritual.

When Lord Buddha challenged some of the beliefs of the people of His time, the first reaction of the orthodox was to cast Him and His followers out as heretic. On closer examination, when they discovered that His philosophy represented and represented that Eternal Truth, they eagerly accepted it, readjusted their thinking, and proclaimed Lord Buddha as one of the manifestations or incarnations of their Deity! No doubt they realised that His teachings were the same as their own fundamental beliefs which had with the passage of time been overgrown with a good deal of the moss of perversion and superstition. This they were glad to discard.

Thus has the spirit of religion been preserved in India. Over the centuries an unwritten code of conduct, of behaviour and of idealism has been developed to connote a "Hindu". The religion is not governed by a rigid set of dogmas and doctrines; and if, here and there, a pseudo-religious leader lays some down, he is only proving that Hinduism is not even tied down to the
"dogma of no-dogmas". It gives Man, every man, the freedom to seek the Reality and to share it with all. It recognises that God alone exists; He is One, but not even constricted to Oneness and so He can be called variously! He is the Centre of all beings, as near to the most pious lindu saint as he is to the devout Christian or Muslim-eqally near to the atheist and to the sinner! Its legends dramatise this enigmatic truth by tales of demons who hated God but reached Him because this hatred was wholehearted and therefore bound them to Him (which the word religion means).

That perhaps is the secret of its vitality and the fountain of its eternal youth. This Ancient Religion is ever new, rediscovering itself in every new revelation of the

Truth, be it philosophical or scientific. It is concerned primarily with Truth, though it does not turn a blind eye on other aspects of life which might involve half-truths and falsehood. Truth it clings to; it is ever ready to adapt itself to changing conditions.

I have endeavoured to garner the main stream of thought perennially gushing from this eternal fountainhead of Religion. The theory that the tenets of this ancient religion are the common denominators of all the "religions" of the world is gaining ground and more and more people are convinced that the original broadcasters of this religion lived in the Arctic eircle and migrated southwards, sowing the seeds of Truth as they went. There is a great mass of scientific literature in support of this, but to me whether all these data are valid or not, the spirit underlying them is invaluable. Religion (ligature) must unite; that is what the word means. That which disunites is not ligature, but fracture!

SWAMI VENKATESANANDA.

FOREWORD

Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji, one of the foremost among the disciples of His Holiness SWAMI SIVANANDA Guru of hallowed memory, has brought in a new era of better under, standing, love and tolerance amongst various religions in South Africa, Israel, Mauritius ete. His great and noble work of bringing about an unprecedented awakening to the spiritual message of the holy Prophet-Founders of the great World Religions and an awareness of the essential unity underlying different faiths; is being hailed with gladness and gratitude by all in that part of the world. It is a matter of greatest pleasure for me therefore to write these words as a Foreword to this latest book of the revered Swamiji, which constitutes yet another contribution of his towards this task of reinterpreting ancient religion to modern man in his laudable work of bringing man closer to God.

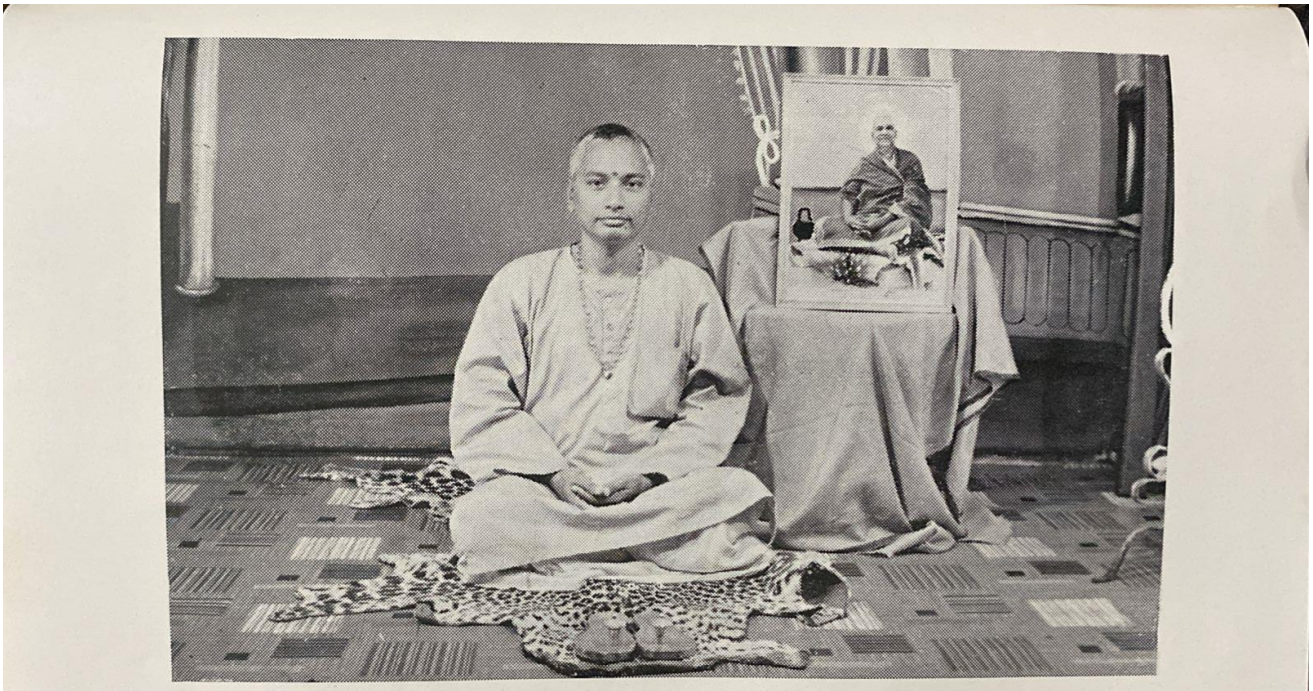
A new vision and a fresh approach are indeed very much needed in the sphere of man and his religion if 20th century man with his changed thought-forms must be enabled to grasp and assimilate Truths stated at the dawn of civilization. Thus alone

would he be enabled to regain the basic and the vital higher values in life that form the common heritage of mankina which the present day world is in danger of losing for ever. I welcome this book as a most timely one that fulfls a world-need widely felt. everywhere.

The revered author has done a signal service to his fellowmen and I wish the book widest circulation.

Sivananda Nagar, Rishikesh,
Rishikesh,
17-10-1966.

SWAMI CHIDANANDA
President
Divine Life Society.



Swami VENKATESANANDA

Swami VENKATESANANDA

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CHAPTER I

ONE EXPERIENCE: MANY EXPRESSIONS

One of the things in which we take special pride in India is the peaceful cooperation of the different religions there. Only when political considerations interfere, religious distinetions acquire some prominence; otherwise it has been a country where all religions were welcomed, not merely tolerated, but were appreciated by the practitioners of other religions.

PRESIDENT DR. RADHAKRISHNAN.

In Madagascar a Christian girl asked me, "Why do you Hindus worship so many gods, whereas we worship only One God?"

I replied with a question, "How may Gods are there?"

"Only one," she said.

"Then why do you say "my god" and "your gods" as though you yourself believed there were several?"

She did not utter another word, for only those who are themselves not sure that there is only one God, argue. Those who believe in the One God know that, albeit in various ways and forms, everyone worships Him alone.

Though He can be called by many names and approached by different people in different ways, the Indian believes that there is only One God. "Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti", declare the Vedas. "Truth is one, sages express it in different ways." Expression only is different, not the realisation nor the experience. A group, representing many different nations, sit drinking milk, eash in his own cup, round the same table, experiencing the same sensation (that of drinking milk), but each identifies that milk with a noun from his own language, a sound strange to his

companions. His cup may be different, his name incomprehensible, but the milk is the same.

All prophets and all religions sing the glory of the One God. Just as the language of the song is different, so the context in which each Prophet expresses his experience is different. Moreover, people to whom they address themselves have different capacities of understanding, some big, some small, some so weak that they can only grasp diluted truth, others stron and able to bear the unshaded light. Prophets and sages had, and still have, a difficult and delicate task in adapting their wisdom and knowledge to the degree that is assimilable to the taste of their listeners. He is a bad host who himself a diabetic insists that his guests must observe his own strict regimen. One formula or concept of God should not be forced on all. The very fact that all religions, even newly concocted ones, eventually split up into sects, shows that the very nature of humanity is incapable of assimilating a unified concept. Such dogmatie streamlining would lead to a twofold tragedy. (i) It would for ever imprison the Infinite in a finite concept. All concepts are finite. It is thus the Grace of the Infinite that It inspires infinite finite viewpoints, thus fulfilling a mission otherwise impossible. (ii) It would turn away from its redeeming portals millions who either cannot or do not comprehend or concede that concept.
But, of course, both these are impossibilities.

True religion reaches out to each one of us at his own level and elevates us from there, to the supreme goal, the ideal, the Truth, to God.

In the East, we have recognised the differences, have argued over them, and ultimately recognised:—

(a) the unity underlying (again!) all the differences, and

(b) the need for the differences themselves.

If this process has not welded us into uniformity, at least it has enabled us to be more understanding in the realisation that in the words of President Dr. Radhakrishnan).

"The ways may twist and turn, but when you once reach the top the spiritual landscape which you discern is exactly the same. All those who by different routes have come up to the top are people who belong to one family".

Only one religion really exists, for, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, religion is "'a personal encounter of the individual with the Supreme and not merely a doctrinal conformity or ceremonial propriety", and even in its literal sense it is the factor that unites the individual withi God. Different elanish religions are the creations of man's diseased mind, vanity and vested interestsor, as a concession we may say that they are mere expedients.

On our planet we have only one ocean, ant yet we have a number of them marked on the map, the distinction being a nautical expedient.

God is One. The religion that leads Man to Him is also one. Some call Him Krishna or a thousand other names and the religion, Hinduism. Some call Him Christ and the religion. Christianity. The devotee of Christ is Christion; the devotee of Vishnu is Vaishnava; the devotee of Siva is a Saivite; the adorer of Isvara is an Arya Samajist; he who adores Allah is Muslim, but all of them believe in the One Fundamental Truth.

There is no difference superiority or inferiority-among the Prophets either. Each one comes from Him, is of Him-is He Himself The one who came later is not necessarily superior to the one who came earlier. Rain fell last year, a thousand years ago, and this year. this year's rainwater superior to last Years or that of a thousand years ago?

He comes to all His children, in the way in which they can recognise Him, and with the message which they need. He is nobody's domestic servant, and no one can dictate where, how and if He should incarnate. All are His children. He comes to help primitive man in the jungle as He comes to guide the Roman emperor. We do not believe that there is a single heathen to be saved by proselytisation. Though the Hindu religion has a ritual for the most trivial event in life, there is no ritual for religious conversion!

Conversion is tantamount to an admission of the superiority of one faith over another, of one path over another. That in our eyes is blasphemy as well as moral disaster, for faith thus shaken can never be strongly built again.

The followers of the sage, saviour or Prophet have, however, the duty and privilege of serving their fellowmen with the Gospel they themselves received from their Master. The attitude here is not one of self-righteousness, religious or intellectual vanity, but one of worship of the Supreme Being Who dwells in the hearts of all those whom we thus serve.

CHAPTER II

COMMON SOURCE: COMMON GOAL

Just as the waters of all the rivers which had their source in the universal rain eventually reach the same ocean, though the rivers may be known by different names, all faiths originated in Him and lead to Him.

A SANSKRIT COUPLET.

The whole mass of Rig veda and other Suktas mainly describe the following phenomenon: rising of the sun with splendour making a round of the heavens; setting and sleeping in the nether world for some months'-These are the words of the late R. A. Sastri, a Sanskrit research scholar, who, as a remarkable old man, ventured out of his ancestral home in South India to undertake a pilgrimage to the Land of the Midnight Sun. Inspired by his study of the Vedas and the thesis of Balgangadhar Tilak indicating that the North Polar region was the original home of the Aryans, he not only visited Scandinavia, but toured several European countries unearthing vestiges of the basis of the Vedie Religion. To me the words "Aryan" and "Artic" have a similar ring and there certainly are an oda collection of facts which indicate these vestiges.

A good while ago an Indian sage when asked by some newcomer to India what was the religion of his country, replied, "We belong to a very ancient religion". This religion, in his eyes, did not have to distinguish itself from others in relation to itself. In its eyes there was no other religion. It is the ancient and eternal (Sanatana) religion (dharma). Even in using these two words let us not be eager to distinguish it from any other religion, for that is against the spirit of religion.

The word "Arya" need not be confined to a race or ethnie group. In Sanskrit it simply means "respectable person". The religion of these "respectable people" needed no name!

Its birth was in Scandinavia, probably a warm, mediterranean type Scandinavia. A sudden reversal of climate, indicated by recent analysis of bog pollen and the discovery in modern times of mamooths frozen in the Siberian tundra with subtropical herbage still undigested in their stomachs, may have sent the population in an explosion southwards, seeking survival. With the Aryan went their ancient religion, migrating through Europe, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Persia, right over to the Indus valley where their "ancient religion" acquired its present name, Hindu-the religion practiced by the dwellers beyond the Indus or Hindus.

As explosions never confine their energy to India through another roete via Central Asia (China and Tibet). In spite of scattering, the Aryans were conservative enough (like the Jews) not to lose their cultural and spiritual heritage. They were also liberal enough to give and take whatever was good in their own and other's faiths. Remarkable significance may be seen in the fact that today all the major religions of the world manifest their origin in these two cultural belts. All are rooted in the same Ancient Religion and according to climate and historical necessity have grown into different shapes. Unfortunately this has led to their being called by a diversity of names.

Geographically Scandinavia and India could not be much further apart yet some affinities between them are striking. The very names of the two countries, dividing between them the Scandinavian peninsula, hold a strange secret. Norway to the Norwegians is "Norge" and Sweden to the Swedes is "Sverige". In Sanskrit "Naraka" means "hell" and "Sverga" means "heaven"!

Not myself knowing these countries, this from which agriculturists find it hard to scrape a living. They must seek to live from the sea, but their coast is a terrific maze of rocky island, reefs and rock-bound fjords, with turbulent winds from the high mountains and storm in winter, a sailor's nightmare.

Sweden, on the other hand, has much fat land and good agricultural areas in the South. Much of its coast is on the Baltic, is low lying, with sheltered harbourage. No wonder that Norge is Naraka and Sverige Sverga! What must have originally been nicknames for the two so different sides of the Scandinavian peninsula must have consequently become their names.

Even our myths and legends have their parallels. Solomon Reinach in his book "Orpheus" says:

> “Hindu legends concerning the origin of the world... a giant was supposed to have been sacrificed by the gods and all living creatures issued from his severed limbs. The same idea is found among the Scandinavians".

Again the Gita (Chapter A, verse 1) speaks of the wise calling the universe "the indestructible peepul tree having its roots above and its branches below, whose leaves are the metres or hymns... below and above spread its branches, nourished by the Qualities of Nature, ete." In Nordie myth Yggdrasil is that great tree of the universe with the tips of its branches invisible "growing" into the clouds above, and about its roots coiled the Great Serpent, gnawing forever at those roots. .. (who else but Serpent Time, the Couch of Narayana)! The world of men, Middelgard, was situated on a plane half way up the trunk.

A Swedish friend, tasting for the first time our Indian dish Payasam exclaimed, "But this is just like "Risgryns grot" with rice and milk and almonds and cardemum; just as we have it as a ritual dish at Christmas!" Payasam or-Sweetened rice is a dish eaten at a festival in South India on the fourteenth of January! Perhaps both festivals were once the same, and celebrated the return of the sun after the winter solstice.

In the old days Scandinavians made the dish. with barley. Perhaps the migrating Aryans only forsook barley when they came upon the native rice across the Indus. Now Scandinavia imports from them the more palatable rice!

Some Scandinavian scriptures are called "Eddas", "Vedas", phonetically identical with the Hindu In Egyptian and Babylonian mythology, water is called "apsoo", the Sanskrit word meaning water. There are very many more similar expressions, revealing a common strand running through all the scriptures too-the Quran, the Bible and the Vedas and Upanishads.

The original scripture was also one; we all know that the bulk of it has been lost. The Veda, the Bible, ete., are the residual fragments. There is fierce controversy as to which is the Word of God-the Quran or the Bible. Who can tell? To a man who knows only the Chinese language. English, French and German will look alike. You must be God to recognise "the Word of God". The Indian has no hesitation in recognising that all scriptures are the Word of God.

As I have already pointed out, as this religion migrated South, the "respectable" nomads readily adapted and adjusted their faith to suit local climatic and social conditions and accommodated within it the essentials of the existing faith in the new country. Often these account for the differences found among the religions. For instance; even today a Hindu priest who will not dare to wear a shirt in the temples of South India has to wear an overcoat in the Himalayan shrines because it is extremely cold there. These superficialities do not affect the heart of religion, which is universal. They should not be permitted to mar the spirit of love and understanding which has unfortunately been undermined over the past few centuries by self-seeking egotists who have used these superficial differences to further their own inhumanities.

While it is true that organisation is essential to propagate religion, it also creates vested interests which egotists exploit-unfortunately in the fair name of religion.

Beverages have to be preserved in bottles or some such containers. Their distribution needs bars with their distinctive appearance, barmen with their uniforms, and cups and glasses. People who need these beverages look for the bars, and in them, for the

barmen, from whom they get the beverage in a container, drink and then leave the container behind. They do not make the bars their home, nor do they swallow the glasses along with the beverage.

Even so, for the preservation and distribution of the spirit of religion, we need temples and churches, priests and clergy, liturgy and rituals but we should imbibe the spirit and not lacerate our lips by chewing the glasses, i.e., clinging to rituals. Therefore, Dean Inge used to say that institutional religions which begin by strengthening, end by strangling.

Let us never forget: before religion God existed. Institutional religion has necessarily to limit the Truth or God in order to enable the finite soul to ascend through finite steps to the Infinite. But we should never allow the letter to kill the spirit. One who lives in the spirit of religion will realise the wisdom that prompted the great Emperor Aska to eut into rock the edict "Do not quarrel about religions", and Prophet Muhammad to warn his followers against condemning others' faiths, lest they should thus provoke those others in retaliation to blaspheme against the Lord.

Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, similarly commands: "Do not unsettle anyone's faith".

I repeat—all the scriptures of the world proclaim the same truth. In prehistoric times, religious folks took great pains to protect their scriptural wealth. I know that to the South Indian Ghanapaati (one who has mastered the Vedas) learning the Vedas by heart literally every word on the tablet of hite in big spe te talet on palm leaves and later on parchment, our ancestors (whether they were "Hindus" or Jews) strove hard to preserve the scriptures.

Preservation was easier in India than elsewhere, though the care, foresight, wisdom and compassion with which documents like the Dead Sea Scrolls were preserved and "passed on" to posterity should command our admiration.
Religion and civilisation can thrive only when and where there is peace. In the West for at least two thousand years past there have been wars and unrest more or less continually. Hence, we find warlike gadgets and thoughts thriving there. And in the East where there has been comparative peace, religion and culture have been

preserved. Even so, the Indians boldly admit, in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan—"No religion has a monopoly of truth". If it has kind. been preserved in India, it is meant for all mankund.

In order that an ignorant generation may not, in an attempt to cover up its own intellectual inadequacy, tamper with the text to make it one intelligibe bite Balint alteration of the text of the scriptures (especially the Vedas). Similar prohibitions are found in other religions too.

But anyone coud write a commentary! As a matter of fact, it is incumbent on one who wishes to establish a new school of philosophy, to prove that his philosophy is based on the authorities of the Upanishads, ete. This prevented their neglect and disuse, in addition to compelling the philosopher to prove his spiritual worth. Scriptural interpretation is a delicate task. Take for example the ridicule that the pioneers in aeronautics had to encounter. The scriptures did say that angels had wings and flew, but they did not say that machines could not have wings and fly. Therefore, the pious men who condemned as heretics the scientists who felt that flying was possible were merely illogical in their interpretation of the scriptures.

Interpretation of scriptures is inevitable. I have not come across one person so far who takes all the scriptural statements as literally true. While interpreting them. we must beware of misinterpreting them. While making the relevant deduction, we should be careful to see that we do not deduce falsehood and discard truth. The interpreter of a scripture should therefore :—

(a) Go right to the source of the scripture itselt, without being misled or biased by other interpretations. Many expressions like "religion", i charma", "atonement", "scitation"; have lost their original meaning, as generation after generation of "scholars" heaps on the words a little more of its own intellectual rubbish. He should study the scripture afresh, and

(b) Undergo regirous moral, intellectual and spiritual discipline, which alone will qualify him (the adhikarin in Sanskrit) for the noble, delicate and stupendous task ahead.

Authoritative interpreters of religion in India have, therefore, always been men of intuitive wisdom-sages who had come face to face with the Reality, and had experienced Self-Realisa• tion.

CHAPTER III

BE YE GODS ON EARTH

Demoniac, varily, are those worlds enveloped in blinding darkness, and to them go after death, those people who are slayers (ignorant) of the Self.

ISA UPANISHAD.

Philosophers, scientists and psychologists have classified and re-classified mankind only to discover that, unlike minerals, plants and the lower orders of animals where such grouping possible, Man is unique in his uniqueness and will not easily fit into man-made water tight compartments. Each individual is a lovely flower in God's Garden, unique, a special image of God. a unit capable of realising his unity with all Even in the following classification, it is good tr bear in mind that every man is a complex mix ture of two or more of the characteristics attributed to the different types.

The lowest type is the animal in human garb. the man who lives without knowing or ever caring to know why he lives. Describing the nearly animal life of primitive man, Dr. Leaky, the celebrated archeologist and anthropologist, declares that cheat a threefold goal, viz., self-preservation (hunting and eating), preservation of private property, and perpetuation of the species (procreation). These are the characteristics of the higher forms of animals too.

Has the "average man" today any other goal in life? He whose life is restricted to these three animal drives is no better than an animal or a mere labourer who labours aimlessly-whether he tills the soil or ploughs an account book, whether he hunts in

the forest or in a supermarket as its owner. The animal hunts in the forest, the farmer in the farm and the business executive or governmental official in his office.

If this statement gives you the impression that it is degrading to be a farmer, business executive or government official, you are mistaken. It only means—if earning one's livelihood is the only goal of man (whatever be his official or social status and if he works and protects his private property in order to live and to procreate, then he is a labourer (with apologies to this noble profession) and no better than an animal.

It cannot be argued that man distinguishes himself from animals by intelligent organisation of his life and the world he lives in. These are a part of the work necessary to fulfil the animal drives. The honey-bee's organisation of its life and its hive is better than human organisation.

[Professor Karl von Frisch of the University of Graz has increased our knowledge of the remarkable way in which bees communicate to sou another the dim then and distance of source of nector from the hive.

The returning bee dances on the surface of the honeycomb; a round dance if the source is about a hundred yards away—a circular motion backwards and forwards, somewhat like a figure-of-eight, but with the two rings super-imposed one on the other. If the source is more than a hundred yards away, however, the bee dances a real figure-of-eight wagging her abdomen as she reaches the straight side joining the two half rings of the figure.

A lot of nectar stimulates a vigorous, rapid dance; a lesser quantity promotes a slower movement.

The bees can tell from the dance the distance and direction of the source of nectar, because the angle (between the point of reversal in the dance and the top of the cirele) represents the angle between the direction of the sun and the route of the food.]

Man's only title to distinction is self-conseious-ness and his aspiration to God-consciousness. If he possesses this he is a Man, even if the Civil Status office calls him a "labourer".

In course of time during the individual's biography he graduates to the next higher type. He who takes note of the people around him as well as himself, and wants to promote their happiness and welfare too—he is a (social) worker and is no longer a mere labourer. He wants to live, bit he ate i mein bour so animal, but has not yet entered the human kingdom. He still has four (feet or) hands, as it were, with two of which he serves others and with the other two serves his own selfish ends.

This half-man begins to think. He realises that however much he strives, his body decays and is bound to die. He is less and less interested in acquiring and accumulating goods which he is forced in any case to leave behind him here. He is prepared to sacrifice them to promote the happiness of his neighbours. Self-lessness enters the heart of Man and he eagerly parts with what he even needs so that his neighbour may be happy. His perceptions sharpen and he realises. that his neighbour's miseries are as unending as his own. and that any amount of work to promote the neighbour's welfare is doomed to failure. It puzzles him. Why is it that this fruitless task seems inevitable and inexorable? He enquires: "Who am I? How am I in relation to my neighbour? What is this world? What is the purpose of life, or has it any?"

He in whose heart these questions stir is a seeker after Truth. He is a Man. Man must ask himself why he lives and he must seek to know not like at all, but inert existence.

These question burn in the heart of the seeker, in whom the animal-nature has been sacrificed and burnt in the fire of enquiry. That is the true animal sacrifice (of archaie Hindu-ism) and the real burnt-offering (of archaie Jadaism). Burning—

1. destroys,
2. purifies,
3. gives warmth, and
4. illumines.

This inner spiritual burning:—

1. destroys the animal nature.
2. purifies the heart of all selfishness, etc.,
3. fills the heart with the warmth of humanity, and

4. illumines the seeker's Path. It sheds : beam of light on the Path of Truth which he pursues.

When in that Light, he finds that knowledge. that understanding of the Truth which he sees he becomes a sage. He has reached the ultimate goal of all existence. The difference between the seeker and the sage lies in the spiritual awakening of enlightenment. How long does it take for the seeker to become a sage? What is the distance between these two points in evolution? It is the same (to put it in lighter vein) as the distance between the tip of the nose and the tip of the tongue, in most of us, so near and yet so far_"it looks as if we can do it right now (and touch the tip of the nose with the tip of the tongue) but it may take a long time".

If a child is asleep and I ask you, "When will he wake up?" What is your answer? Maybe the next moment, maybe the next morning. Maybe we attain Perfection or enlightenment now. Maybe we do so after a few thousand years or life-time. But it is generally agreed that if the fire of enquiry is intense enough and if the animal nature is completely burnt in self-sacrificing service and charity, we can attain enlightment immediately.

The labourer is ignorant of Reality. The worker has a glimpse. The seeker seeks. The sage KNOWS.

We must kill or sacrifice the animal in us, sublimate the human, seek and find the Reality. That is life. That is the purpose of life; one must become a sage. The goal of the body is the Truth. A rishi is one who sees-the Seer. The word "Bishop" also has the same connotation. Rishi or Bishop is a man of vision.

It is the sage who gives us our philosophy and our religion (our Dharma), the light that illumines the path of our life, that prevent us from retrogressing into the animal and that enable. us to progress towards Supermanhood, sagehood and eventually divinity. The sage is our Guru whom the devout Hindu regards as God Himself.

The sage is the saviour and redeemer. His influence is not confined to the people of any one category, but to all of them. Sanatana Dharma does not neglect or ignore anyone. The very word "Dharma" signifies that it upholds, supports and prevents

from retrogression anyone who seeks it. The labourer is prevented from degenerating into an animal by injunctions and prohibitions under the penalty of going to hell! The worker is elevated further from his status by the tantalising invitation to heaven as the reward of good actions. The seeker is made to realise that the ultimate Reality frees him from the shackles of birth and death, and thereby, of sin and suffering. And it is the sage's duty to keep the flame of spiritual knowledge alive i all. He is the Guru of all.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAMP IS NOT FURNITURE

The Guru's form is the basis for meditation;
The Guru's feet are the bases of worship:
The Guru's words are Gospel-truth;
The Guru's grace is the root of Liberation.

GURU-GITA.

To the Indian the Guru or the sage-preceptor is verily God on earth. This deification of the Guru has come in for a lot of criticism from unthinking people, the self styled rationalists and free thinkers. What they fail to realise is that the spiritual seeker stands at the opposite pole from them. Whereas they value their own ego-centred personality and its opinions, the seeker realises that the ego is the greatest of all granite walls standing between him and God. The best if not the only implement with which to pull this wall down is total self-surrender to the Guru, regarding him as God. (Incidentally, those who follow the "free thinkers" are really not following them, for is it not the teaching of the free thinkers that one should not follow another? The tragedy here is —when this perverse teaching enters the immature heart, it susceeds in assisting that archenemy of all spiritual aspiration, the ego, thus defeating the lofty aim of the free thinkers themselves).

The seeker's path is regarded as "the razor's edge" and the Kathopanishad asks him to "arise, awake and, having resorted to the feet of the Guru, attain the Knowledge of the Self" Lord Krishna too asks the seeker to serve, fall at the feet of and learn Self-knowledge from the Knowers of Truth. Nor is this attitude a sample of the Indian's blind faith! The Holy Christian Fathers say in their inspiring scripture "Philokalia" :—

"...spare no effort in trying to find a teacher and guide... cleave to him with body and spirit like a devoted son to his father, and from then onwards obey all his commands implicitly, accord with him in everything, and see him not as a mere man, but as Christ Himself"

Indian scriptures declare: "Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati"--- "the knower of the Absolute becomes That". A simple analogy will make this clear. A few pieces of cold and black charcoal, thrown into fire become fire, no longer cold or black, but glowing red and hot. The human-ness of the human being who has "touched" God and is in union with Him is thus transmuted into the Divine.

The electric lamp so long as it remains in the shop is an article of commerce, a piece of furniture. But at home, when it is plugged in to the mains, it is no longer a piece of furniture, but a lamp which illumines the house. It is the Power, the Light, of God that flows through the Guru.

God is the centre and all of us are on the circumference whether on the upper (virtuous) or the lower (vicious) semi-circle. There is a way in which each of us can reach Him ("however sinful you are" , in the words of the Bhagavad Gita immediately via the shortest route (geometrically, the straight line). The Guru is the radius, the shortest line, the straight path, to that Centre which is God. He is "the way, the truth, the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by" Him, in the words the Holy Bible. To the devout Christian, of course, the statement implies that Lord Jesus is the Way, literally, though even he is authorised by the Holy Fathers to regard him individual Preceptor as Christ Himself. But the spirit behind it is that the path to God lies through the manifest God, i.e., Guru.

It is God at the Centre Who, in His supreme love and compassion, reaches out to man, on the circumference, as the radius or the Guru. It Is "visible" to the seeker on the circumference when he turns towards the Centre (God), not otherwise. To that seeker the radius itself is the Centre right through, for it is nothing more than the extension of the Centre. His faith (if it is real) will not let him rest half-way in cheap. hero-worship or personality cult, but lead him right through to the Centre. However, he should not treat the radius as only the path to the Centre, thus making a distinction which is illogical in the context and disastrous to him in as much as this lukewarm faith might lead him away from the radius, looking for the Centre.
When he adheres to the radius, devoutly regarding it as the Centre Itself, he will reach the Centre, where he will certainly realise that the Centre, the radius and the point on the circumference are one and the same. That is when he himself becomes a sage, Guru, and therefore God!

To each seeker, therefore, there was only one-Guru (though the converse is not valid and a Guru may and does have many disciples), even as from a point on the circumference there can only be one straight line to the Centre. It is possible and even desirable for the seeker to meet many saints or spiritual teachers and derive some benefit from their company and teaching. But the Guru is only one. By its very definition the word "Guru" means, in Sanskrit, "the dispeller of darkness". When there is darkness in the room, the lamp that first entered that room is the dispeller of the darkness. You may introduce many more lamps into that room to make it brighter, but the "dispeller of the darkness" it brighter, but the "dispeller of the darkness" is only one.

“When the chela (disciple) is ready the Guru is found". This is the truth, but has bewildered many a Westerner as well as people of the East. All wonder, "But how do I KNOW when I have found my Guru?" You will know, but how to explain this! There seems to be only one analogy to describe the situation.

The untouched maiden, nature stirring her to maturity, longs for a mate, finds him, just as he finds her, and to him alone she loses her virginity. She feels herself maturing, no longer a girl, and to that beloved alone she owes it. Only one man could have given her this feeling, setting her on the path of womanhood. And, "She knew

him" to borrow a Biblical expression. Even if She married others later on, only he gave her the knowledge of womanhood-only one.

In the same way, to a seeker the Guru can only be one, though this should not lead to clanish fanaticism.

Though Guru, disciple and initiation on the one hand, and teacher, pupil and instruction on the other appear to be synonyms, there is a vast but subtle difference. The distinction between the Guru and the teacher has been explained. The disciple is one who has disciplined himself and is eager to get going, to be initiated into spiritual activity; whereas the pupil is like the pupil of the eye which acts as a channel for the light without the ability to assimilate it, and, what is worse, contracts when the light is very bright! The Guru disciple relation is inviolable and irrevocable, whereas the teacher-pupil relation might even turn topsy-turvy. "Initiation" is giving the first push along a certain path of activity, and there might be quite a few initiations before the disciple is well on the path, even as the virgin has a number of "first experiences" before she is established in motherhood. Instruction is more intellectual and idealistic and is subject to change (and hence admits of argumentation and even scepticism) whereas initiation is spiritual activity where argument and scepticism are meaningless obstructions.

The Indian is emphatic that without a Guru, the right knowledge cannot be acquired by any man. As I said earlier, there is a big risk in depending upon oneself, in that one may then succumb to the temptations of the lower, impure mind and the ego, mistaking them for the voice of the soul. When we are engaged in the daily battle of life, it is seldom possible for anyone to have a level head! Only a balanced mind is receptive to true wisdom. This is obviously the reason why even when the players in a game of football are honest and friendly, they appoint a referee to conduct the game and guide them. The Guru is our referee and the scripture forms the "Rules of the Game" of life .

The seeker, both in the East and in the West, is called upon to lay himself bare before the Guru or the spiritual preceptor. In a highly interesting Christian book "The Way of a Pilgrim", the author says:—

"The Starets (the preceptor) sent me away with his blessings and told me that while learning the prayer I must always come back to him and tell him everything, making a very frank confession and report; for the inward process could not go on properly and successfully without the guidance of a teacher".

Mankind is a pyramid with a broad base and narrow peak. The number of highly evolved per. sons, the sages, is bound to be very few in each generation, but the tragi-comedy of the modern world is that great men, few as they are, are not recognised by the people of their generation. Not because the latter are stupid. They are clever. They can today glority, deify and worship an incarnation of God or a great saint of the past because they need not practise His teaching. But they ignore the saints of today and the living incarnations of God, because of the irksome necessity of a duty to follow their teachings. Posthumous adoration is the cunning plan by which the clever man makes use of the saints. It suits his convenience.

The tradition in India has always been immediate adoration of the living saint, the Guru, as God. The sage is an undoubted authority on religion or dharma. To him it is unambiguous, incontrovertible, intuitive and direct revelation. It is one of the incongruities of modern thinking that we call one an "authority" on a subject, who quotes others as his authority, just as we call someone a "brilliant" doctor who depends upon the greatest number of instriments and gadgets. If he is brilliant, his instrument would be his own brilliance! The sage is the Light of Truth Itself. His words are the bases of our dharma, the light that guides us on the path of our life.

CHAPTER V

ANGELS OF LIGHT OR DENIZENS OF DARKNESS?

Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance;
thereby beings are deluded.

GITA.

Angels of Light or denizens of darkness-Which shall we be? The choice rests with us.

If we follow the Light enshrined in our scriptures and shed by the Prophets, Saviours and sages on the path of our life, we shall be angels of Light. If we deliberately turn away from the Light, we shall be denizens of darkness, fruit-Jessly bemoaning our miserable fate.

From sages and scriptures we learn the ancient religion. They are the pillars on which it rests. They are the wings that enable the individual soul to fly to the realms of peace, prosperity and perfection, health, happiness and harmony.

The greatest scientist of this century, Dr. Albert Einstein, declares:-
"The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true sciences. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness."

But the pseudo-scientist is convinced that "religion is the opiate of the masses". If you transfer part of the money that is in your pocket into mine, our problems will be solved-say the economists. Sociologists, psychologists, technicians, and politicians, have all their own solutions to offer to human problems. Are they charlatans? No. They are "workers" working for human welfare, but clumsy in their blindness so that in spite of the manifold blessings conferred by these self-appointed benefactors upon humanity, we seem to be going from bad to worse. The faster these good men drive humanity to its goa! of peace, happiness and prosperity, the farther that goal itself recedes. Why?

The answer is simple. The artist has brilliant colours and the best of intentions, but a smudgy canvas with no light; so, wanting to paint? lovely face, after wasting time and paint, he is shocked at the sickening product. He should have had light and a prepared canvas, then his talents would not have been wasted.

That light is dharma or religion. The canvas of humanity is the self of man. We have not bothered to evaluate the worth of the heart of man, nor to lift the mask and see if he is truly a human being or an animal in human garb. We have indiscriminately (for the "benefactors" themselves were without the light of religion or dharma) poured precious and powerful scientific knowledge into the hearts of the denizens of darkness. They in their turn, endeavour to put the light out in others' hearts too. Good milk is poured into unclean eups and is turned to poison. The urgent need is for self-purification, the knowledge of how to turn away from evil.

God is omnipresent, God is good, yet evil exists, an enigma to many, a powerful spur to doubt in God's goodness, a haunting Devil (deevil-a touch of French and it means "of evil"!). Manifest in many ways evil lies also in the mud-slinging between leaders of different religions, accusing one another of being the Devil's disciples. The Devil, horned, tailed, hooved, a Positive Force how otherwise explain the existence of evil?

The Hindu theory that "God alone exists" has been declared false by Christian theologians because it seems not to take into account the existence of evil. Yet the Biblical Genesis presents the same problem! God created Adam in His own image, and specifically commanded him not to eat of the forbidden fruit, yet the Devil in the shape of the Serpent was able to persuade Adam to eat it. We created the snake, giving it equal or even greater power than God?

In probing after consciousness of the whole structure of Being, the Indian sage comes upon these transcendental questions which he admits the human intellect cannot answer. The ques. tion itself is the product of ignorance and cannot be answered upon the same plane in which ignorance exists. A scientist would call this the "Uncertainty Principle". When asked questions on such transcendental points, Lord Buddha remained silent. He demanded that instead of wasting our time in polemical dispute we should concentrate on the evil of delusion that encircles us. Lord Krishna in effect demands the same. Light, and Darkness have been created by God and the discriminate man should walk the path of Light, He proclaims.

Of every picture light and shade are the parts.

Hence our Master Sri Swami Sivananda defined evil as "negative" good. Just as dirt has been defined as matter not in its proper place, evil may be defined as conduct unbecoming-animal-nature in the human. This evil we are now concerned with may be termed personal or subiee-tive evil, that which seems an inherent affliction of the human heart. This problem we may ponder over, but some waste their precious human birth au worrying over evils in Nature Herself! "Terrible" earthquakes, "ghastly" faminess ete., ete. The Universe is the Body of God, analagous to our own body. For all we know, earthquakes may be eruptions to rid that body of poison, like eruptions in our own bodies. Famine may be God's self-purifying fasting in relation to His Body. The healing and purifying effeet is not restricted to those directly affected.

Cleansing pity lies also in the heart of the beholder. A nation-wide disaster is often an exercise in world-wide compassion. Compassion in the hearts of those who are feeling their way along the path to God is a helping light. Doubt fed by evil in the heart of the atheist makes him fulminate against the idea of a God (presumaably good, if He is worth anything at all) tolerating such misery. He is the man who is usually the one who stubbornly refuses to make any sacrifice to alleviate that misery. He nurses that evil of doubt within him, not realising that if he turned away from that inner evil, the outside evil would disappear.

It has been observed that the world-wide help that is sometimes brought to a national disaster generates more loving kindness and joy among those stricken than if they had been left to jog along in their daily rut.

do le, fully and completely, using every gift God has given you in your being, is to turn automatically away from evil. The word "live" is but a reversal of the word "evil". When you are evil you do not live! That is the first rule, the first step in life. If this step is not taken, anything that is put into our hands can and will be used only for evil, for we still exist in the shadow of the picture, and shadow itself is the rule of evil. Our eyes, not yet opened in the darkness, can sense the light and must turn towards it. That itself will enable us to live and promote life.

The veil that still shrouds that path "veil" is nothing more than jumbled "evil") is selfish-seated in the little self-spelt ironically with a capital "I", making the good man vile (still the same old four letters!).

From the word "live" we should exorcize this image of the ego. Now we get "Ive", which is dumb and lifeless for want of a life-giving vowel. We hunt for the antithesis of the exor-eized vowel, the opposite of selfishness. It is self-surrender, which seeks nothing for self-the symbol for nothing is "O". Give "Ive" a beating heart so that "live" may become "love" No danger here. Love is the antithesis of all evil.

This mage will not transform the whole world immediately to a paradise, where police. prisons and armies no longer exist. The Law of Evolution does not envisage universal perfection at a particular moment in history. Perfection— call it salvationis individual. Eradication of evil is individual too. The world continues to exist, serving as the school for other evolving souls.
To you, today, the primary school has ceased to be of value, but remember it is still busy educating your grandchildren. The world will still continue to have its good and evil, together bringing up to its surface a liberated soul with all its faculties unfolded, even as dirty mud and clear water help bring up to the surface the charming lotus. This soul will be full of the love of God (religion), love of wisdom (philosophy) and love of humanity (dharma). Such men should be our leaders, for they know what humanity needs and what can truly be beneficial; to all mankind.

Only such people will be able to handle the powers of Nature constructively, not they who have all the mathematical formulae and the technical know-how in their brain. As an Indian (Saiva Siddhantam) scripture points out— "the virtues of a loveless man are sinful". Has not the world already witnessed that "good knowledge" possessed by men of evil heart will be used destructively?

We should not ask "Does evil exist, why?", but "How can I be free from evil?"

Light and darkness constitute the world, and there is no use wracking our mind over them, When we are in the dark, we should make up our mind what we want to do. If we want to see and to do (to live, in other words), we should seek the light. If not, go to sleep! For darkness promotes inertia and "death"

Light is dharma. Its light will dispel the darkness ef evil. Once it is there, we shall not be overcome by evil any more and evil will vanish from our sight. That is the nature of light. Even the flame of a small candle has not experienced darkness-all the darkness in the world cannot defy the candle. In the eyes of God, the Supreme Light of Lights, there is no evil, no pain, no calamity, no misery. It is only because we are unable to look through His eyes and we are foolishly identifying ourselves with this little body and finite mind that we see evil, entertain evil and bring evil to ourselves and others, too.

Evil is a shadow. It veils the truth. In the darkness of ignorance, man suffers from a thousand fears, and in his restless anxiety to get rid of them multiplies them to his own and to mankind's misfortune.

The story is told of Alexander the Great, how he tamed a wild horse, Bucephalus. The horse was offered to his father, King Phillip of Mace-donia. No one dared ride him. All Alexander did was to turn the horse to face the sun, so that he could not see the haunting shadow. Alexander knew that his shadow was what terrified the horse. So the wild horse became tame.

Face the Light of Dharma. The darkness of ignorance and the shadow of evil will vanish from your sight. All the forces of nature are at our disposal, all the blessings showered upon us by hosts of scientists, economists and politicians. Only the Light will make them fruitful, but that Light must shine in every individual heart.

CHAPTER VI

THE WEDDING OF THE CENTURY

He who understands the manifest and the unmanifest both together, crosses death through the unmanifest and attains life eternal through the manifest.

ISA UPANISHAD.

How can Light lead to darkness?

Indian religion has often been blamed for the "backwardness" of the country! It is a primitive political technique. To camouflage one's own complicity in a crime the criminal loudly proclaims of the victim "It is his own fault" When India was truly religious, she was also economically prosperous and enjoyed a Golden Age of Cultural advancement.

The religion of India has never tolerated lazi-ness. "You cannot remain idle for a single moment," declares Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. The Upanishads command Man to produce abundant food (material wealth). The Smritis (Moral Codes) exalt the householder's life, and hold out the threat that if a man should die without leaving a son behind him, he would have to spend some time in a special hell, and thus forbid a man to "eut off the family line".

We have been told that India glorities poverty! What a lie! It is like an orientalist reading in a medical journal that a person suffering from serious digestive disturbances should drink only whey, and then declaring that in that country people dislike all food.

Renunciation and poverty were prescribed for a certain group of persons, for the seeker after God was, naturally, not interested in worldly wealth. Coupled with this was the faet that these men of God were highly venerated. Ignorant people transferred this veneration to poverty! Poverty thus began to be looked upon as a symbol of holiness—the ideal for all! Not only were many foreign Indologists shortsighted enough to reach this conclusion, but many Indians were themselves guilty of this grave error. All this admirably suited political invaders and proselytising missions.

There can be little doubt that in India religion and spiritual knowledge were greatly valued. We did not then, nor do we now, suggest that it meant exclusion of all material pursuits. We have always pleaded that there should be a healthy union or synthesis of the two. We have always pleadedi that the Light of spiritual values should also illumine our path in our material pursuits.

Let us first ask ourselves, "Are the orientals backward? If so, in what ways?" It has been the rule that the conqueror sets the fashion. The colder European climate compelled Europeans to wear woollen socks and leather shoes. It became their habit. When they came to warm South India, their dress became the fashion, a symbol of culture; those who did not adopt it. were at first laughed at and later even frowned upon. With European dress, it became difficult. to sit on the floor as was the Indian custom. Chairs and tables moved into "modern" Indian homes. They were the signs of progress. Their absence was "backwardness". What nonsense! The person who is able to squat on the floor can also use chairs and sofas, but one who is accustomed to chairs and sofas becomes their slave and can not do without them. The man who-walks barefoot becomes immune to changes in weather, one whose feet are always covered with socks and shoes "catches a cold" when he goes without them, and suffers from athlete's foot when he wears them in warm clammy weather! Signs of progress! "Old-fashioned" is perhaps synonymous with "adaptable and hardy".

The West is industrially more advanced no doubt, but is a non-industrialised peaceful country backward? Is it a praiseworthy civilisation that fought the two devastating World Wars? Where were they fought and who were the originators of the Wars-the civilised West or the backward East? No backward oriental has been found guilty of wholesale massacre of people and Hitler who had six million Jews gassed was-not an oriental.

These facts do not minimise the importance of material progress, nor hide the fact that, whatever be the reason, the East and India in particular, took too long a nap from her dharmic vigilance, but her ideal (and who does not fall below his ideal?) has been a balanced synthesis of matter and spirit, science and religion, expressed in the following parable:—

A blind man and a lame man were sitting at a street corner, begging. In this age of speed when everyone is rushing about without ever thinking why, who has the time or the inclination to stop and drop a coin in the begging-bowl? Unluckily both of them were unable to pursue their probable benefactors.

One day, the lame man said to the blind one: "Brother, please carry me on your powerful and strong shoulders. We shall be able to pursue: these people and get something out of them." The lame man could not walk, and the blind man the blind man, and the latter came the former. Their problem was solved.

The truly religious man does not condemn scientific research and progress. He is not averse to material advancement, machines and motor cars, where they are constructive, but what religion does decry is blind pursuit of material-ism, which is as dangerous as the blind man's venture to pursue someone across the road—he might cause a major road accident. Modern prophets of all religions all over the world have reorientated their outlook on life. There is none today who encourages idle fancy and a lame, impractical approach to religion. All want religion to be translated into terms of actual daily life. My own Master, Swami Sivananda's maxim, therefore, was: "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise".

This century, God willing, will see a stupendous union, the wedding of this Age, the marriage of science and Religion. Like the blind man, Science must carry Religion on its shoulders, and be guided by its vision. Thus can be brought about unimagined progress in all fields of human activity and aspiration, It will, too, be the revival of the true spirit of the ancient religion.

We speak of "the ancient religion". Aldous Huxley calls it "The Perennial Philosophy". "Sanatana Dharma" is yet another name for the same thing, though these noble Sanskrit terms have been used by a clannish religious sect to further its own vested interests. Sanatana means immortal and also immortalising. "Dharma" is that substratum common to all religion. Detailed connotation of these two words is given in "Sanatana Dharma", a wonderful book by His Holiness Swami Bharati Krishna Tirtha.

He gives the following scriptural definition of the word "Dharma"
"that which prevents us from going down, ruining ourselves in any manner or respect whatsoever, and makes for our welfare, progress and uplift all-round".

Of course, the swami goes on to distinguish it from the word "religion" which he feels is. "very small and circumscribed": “ very small and circumscribed”. Here, with

all reverence to His Holiness, we disagree, for the root-meaning of the word "religion" is almost a paraphrase of the word Dharma. "Religion" is "to bind again"—to bind mankind together by the cord of love and to bind man once again to the Omnipresent God. If the West has strayed from that ideal, so also has the East strayed from Dharma.

Rightly interpreted and understood, therefore, dharma or religion is the light that enables. us to take note of the neighbour (ie. all living beings) and do our duty by them, and also to become aware of the indwelling divine omnipresence and to realise It.

Dharma or religion demands that the two. should be simultaneous, a revelation of the symbolism of the Holy Cross in which the horizontal bar represents Lord Jesus' commandment, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" vertical been, the shouras ent, "Love thy God", the two to be welded into a single act of loving his Omnipresence.

If, however, either has to be given precedence, during the training period, religion or dharma asks that man should first know his Self, that he should "seek the Kingdom of God first". That knowledge is the Light, as it were, in which he will be able to perceive himself and the world in the correct perspective. Hence it was that the Lord, according to the Holy Bible, created Light before other beings.

CHAPTER VII

THE LIGHT WITHIN

To those whose ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge of the Self, like the sun, knowledge reveals the Supreme.

GITA.

"Know thy Self" has been an ancient commandment, and it is as valid today as it was in pre-historic times. Self-knowledge is basic to dharma or religion. How else does one love the neighbour as "oneself"? The knowledge of one's self is the surest way of awakening in one's heart that deep and abiding love of God that religion demands. Even introversion of one's vision, the first step towards the acquisition of this knowledge, promotes humanity in one's heart.

Politicians, men, and humanity must be their first consideration. When they turn their gaze inward and in the Light that ever shines within, perceive their own Self-only then will they learn to "love the neighbour as thrself". This basic knowledge is like preparing the soil. without which all efforts at cultivation will be fruitless. Man should become human first, and that is the first task of Dharma.

wonder at the inevitable conclusion. Power tends to exploit, enslave and oppress the weaker one. We have seen in the modern world, in this "Machine Age", that the Powerful Man tends to substitute robots for men, for the simple reason that the robots do not question his motives nor refuse to participate in his foul-play. Where men are retained, the Powerful Man grinds them into human robots mechanically relaying their Master's Voice! The saving grace in this destructive trend is that the killer ultimately kills himself, even as fire, though it burns others, burns itself out. The fiercer the power, the sooner the end is reached. The saner man discovers the folly of knowledge without wisdom, which is usually at the root of corrupt Power, and realises that mankind will not survive unless man becomes wholly human, leaving behind him the image of the lion-headed god. (see Chapter XVII).

If knowledge is power, wisdom is love. Whereas knowledge is of the intellect. wisdom is of the soul, says Walt Whitman. Wisdom is the radiance of the God-in-man. Wisdom is the Light-within which enables man to see his way in this labyrinth of chaos and confusion. Knowledge is power, wisdom is its restrained and proper use-"it" here standing for knowledge and power.

A motor car is good. but the man behind the wheel must be wise, self-controlled and humann. He must realise that the life of a child on the road is more valuable than his right to drive fast. The man who can see himself as the victim of the accident is a religious man, a wise man, a man of Dharma.

Without this Light of wisdom, the best of intentions would still lead us to hell, or rather create it here! To illustrate this-we go to a sumptuous hotel with every luxury calculated to promote our happiness. We are surrounded by friends and are ready to enjoy ourselves in that "heaven on earth". Suddenly the lights go oti and there is the sound of an explosion outside. The whole place becomes as fearful as hell itself. Our one aim then is to get away from the hotel as quickly as possible. But, in the darkness we cannot even get out with our limbs intact. With the lights on, we were very happy. Without the lights we stumble and perhaps break a few bones.

With the Light of wisdom to guide us, earth is a paradise and life a song of joy. but in the darkness of ignorance this very earth proves to be a hell.

It is interesting to note that even Lord Buddha equated Light with knowledge, wisdom and Dharma (Dhamma). The Bhagavad Gita does so, too. There is a hidden warning here which should not go unnoticed. Light can only be used to illumine the path of oneself and of others. It is not a candle to be sold in the market. Men of religion should beware of turning religion to material advantage making a business of Dharma.

The darkness of ignorance engenders fear in our heart. In it we mistake a rope for a snake and feel that our life is in constant danger. The light of the knowledge that the soul is immortal and the body is perishable will liberate us from this morbid fear. In the darkness of ignorance, we conjure up "enemies" whose only interest in life is to harm us. We are men seeing ghosts in trees and posts when walking through a strange country at night. We suffer from pride and prejudice and these add to our miseries.

The light of Truth will enable us to see that we are one with all humanity, with the entire universe and that the Great Love that is God links us all forever. We shall learn to love all, and live in harmony with our neighbour.

CHAPTER VIII

CHASING THE SHADOW

That, the Light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all.

GITA.

When we are not guided by this inner Light, we are often misled in our quest for happiness. The Light reveals to us that happiness is within. Its absence makes us feel that it is in the objects of sense-pleasure. The striving to obtain them in mistake for the Light becomes so intense that the aim of the quest itself is quickly forgotten! Two dogs begin to fight for a piece of bread. The fight grows more and more fierce. They forget the bread and chase each other hither and thither, still fighting.

Forgetting that the highest happiness is within-in the Self-man invents extrovert methods of obtaining pleasure. He earns money to acquire other means of buying pleasure. Soon, he gets so deeply immersed in the business, of earning money, that money becomes his goal and he earns money, automatically gathering it, at a great loss of personal happiness.

In the absence of light, we fall into the trap of exploiters who create an illusion of progress and comfort, to cheat us. Take two examples.

We are civilised now and our womenfolk do not have to do the household chores like sweeping, washing, etc., as their grandmothers did. Machines do them, but machines are expensive. A husband has to work harder to produce the money. Result number one transferred slavery!nIf the wife is sympathetic and finds no real use for the saved time, she works as a shop assistant sweeping and washing there for a wage. That is result number two. We have now completed the dreary circle and arrived back at the starting point. The manufacturers of these gadgets exploit the simple housewives.

Even where this does not happen and where there is real increase in leisure, people go on a holiday to enjoy it. They rush around preparing for the holiday. When they get to the destination, they rush around settling down. They visit buildings, eat in hotels and roam the parks and beaches (all of which they had "at home"), and return from the holiday-exhausted! A few weeks' work after this further exhausts them. and they must have another holiday. Travel agents exploit the situation by advertising that only a holiday will save you from breakdown!

These unfortunates have no philosophy of life. The Light within is ignored, while they chase the shadow cast by the interplay of Spirit and Matter, mistaking shadow for substance. The Inner Light (the religious spirit) will enable them to perceive Self-knowledge, the real goa. of life.

The Light will also reveal to them, through an examination of the deep-sleep state and the moments of pleasure after sensual enjoyments that real happiness, the fountain-source of supreme bliss, is within. This will transformi the world from the pleasure-garden which it is now thought to be, into an evolutionary medium for every individual.

Sin and suffering are only the direct result of ignorance of Divine Omnipresence. Ignorance itself is sin, and suffering is the curative phase of ignorance. That Inner Light which dispels this darkness of ignorance removes once for all these two concepts from our mind. The miracle is two fold, the worst sinner is instantly transformed into a glorious saint, and suffering loses its significance.

One common question asked is-"Should religion be necessary in order to do good and to be good. Do we need this beacon to help us steer clear of sin?"

The attention of the Western world has recently been focussed briefly on this question by Dr. Robinson. It is valid only if we confine ourselves to the narrow interpretation of religion as an act of private or public worship and an obligatory turning away (in the sense of running away from the world. The Ancient Religion we are discussing as we shall see when we discuss Karma Yoga (Chapter XXVI) - demands of us the pursuit of a very different ideal. It is what the Holy Cross

symbolises to me, an Indian, "love of God" and "love of the neighbour" simultaneously. In fact, this Love is the Light of God.

Only this can, therefore, prevent us from straying from our path. Without its guiding beam we may abandon the path when the power or pressure that started us on it is weakened by the pleasures of the wayside inn. How many political parties and social organisations have crusaded against poverty and pledged their service to the poor, but the poor in the world still benefactors assume the position of power they fought for, there comes confusion of ideals. In the absence of a determination to face the Light, they are misled by the shadow. They themselves lose direction in the maze of the paraphernalia of power.

Another question is asked. "If the object of religion, in part at least, is to promote good neighbourliness, can it not then be identified with ethics, and need we necessarily associate the Reality or God (whatever be the Name) with it? Is it not possible to have a moral code, like traffie regulations, to govern our life, framed to promote goodness in us and prosperity in the world?" Perhaps, yes, but it is good to remember that even in the case of traffic regulations. they have been found to be ineffective until road-sense has been instilled in peoples' minds. Similarly, unless the religious sense has been awakened in man, it will not be possible to have real law and order, peace and prosperity in the world.

God or the Ultimate Principle is the basic factor in this religious sense. He is the Governor and the Supreme Judge in the Inner World. Only recognition, however feeble, of His Presence, will awaken this religious sense. Only that Moral Code based on God and His Law, will be enduring. Man-made laws are always violated by man.

Much unrighteousness in the world today can be directly attributed to violation of Divine, Eternal Law by man-made law and codes of Portia, thenselyes therefore innately immoral. Political boundaries give rise to wars. Monetary systems promote corruption and exploitation.
Sectarianism leads to riots. Religious dogmas encourage bitterness. If you say that these are inevitable in any society, then you have already admitted that unrighteousness is inevitable.

Perhaps it is, but we, you and I, each entangled in this net because we are turning away from the Inner Light and chasing our own shadows, must escape from entanglement by seeking God and His Righteousness.

This escape route is the base of the Ancient Religion.

CHAPTER IX

POPULAR MYTH AND PHILOSOPHY

"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to then it is not given;... Therefore, speak I to them in parables.''

LORD JESUS.

The Light of this Ancient Religion is available to us in several forms. Solar rays are life-giving. The Sun is considered the deity presiding over our eyes, yet if one who has not trained himself, gazes directly at the midday sun, he may lose his eyesight. The eye specialist tells him to sit in the shade of a tree and look at the sun through the green foliage. Even so, the Light Itself shining through the fundamental scriptures (the Vedas and their end-portion particularly, known as the Upanishads), often dazzles our vision.

The all-merciful spiritual teacher provides shelter from the fierce effulgence of that Light by giving us the cool shade of a tree. Myths and legends are its leaves and through them the life-giving Light filters down so that we may bask in its lustre without being blinded by its glare.

Neglect and even rejection of mythology is & great pity. The modern seeker after truth, proud of his "rationalism" , impatiently explodes the value of myth as unimportant, irrelevant, a figment of primitive imagination, bunkum, mumbo-jumbo. How sad is his blindness, how vain his idea that he is so advanced, his ancestor so primitive. Myth grew from the brave attempt to express the

inexpressible, and perhaps myth is still the surest way of coming close to solving that insoluble problem.

Our knowledge of the Ancient Religion is derived from two sources. The Vedas and the Puranas (source-books of Knowledge and mythology respectively). Their antiquity tempts the modern young man to doubt their validity.

In the analysis of myth and legend and in establishing the validity of philosophie speculation, two types of proof should be sought:—
(a) The intellectual proof. This should be reasonable. Applying this to myth we must give the benefit of the doubt, on the proven assumption that vast changes have taken place on this planet over the years.
(b) The pragmatic proof, i.e, they should have practical significance in our lives. Here there is a pitfall. It is disasterous to assert that legends can be accepted for their pragmatic value though they themselves are totally untenable. This will defeat the purpose of their acceptance, for once their emotional appeal is lost, the valuable influence they exert wanes. There was recently a controversy over the question: "Did Jesus Christ actually live as alleged in the New Testament?" Arguments were advanced for and against. Muslims say that Jesus was not crucified. Christians say that he was. Both of them quote scriptures. Theresa Neuman actually suffered stigmata and people have verified this, but we are told "It is possible under hypnosis or self-hypnosis, to produce stigmata." Many devotees have had direct visions of Lord Krishna. I have met some of them. Shall we disbelieve them all?

Certain events cannot be proved. When it comes to the existence of divine beings or of God, we have to cultivate faith. For that matter we can turn round and ask anyone: "Can you prove that that man is your father?" Only the mother can tell, it is a question of faith. In this the Vedas and other scriptures are our spiritual mother. Scriptural testimony of the Reality is referred to in Sanskrit as Aptavakya which literally means "the utterance of a friend", credible and authoritative. If we accept the friend's advice, we shall be benefited, not he.

Whether Rama, Krishna, Buddha, or Jesus actually lived here or not, is for us not essential. The essential question for us is - "Does His biography and do His teachings inspire us and ennoble our life?"

In relation to life, myth and legend have & validity far greater than history. "The only esson we learn from history," said Bernard Shaw, "is that we do not learn from history." History only repeats itself, but the value of the myth lies in its compelling power derived from its association with Deity and Deity's manifestation in an attitude of intimacy and faith which is absent in history.

The status of Deity is not accorded to historical personages. The mantle of divinity falling on Christ and Krishna alike, exert an unfathomable influence on our life. On this in Them our devotion is fixed. On this in Them we meditate. By virtue of that meditation we grow in the divine virtues embodied in Them. That is the purpose of mythology. This value in mythology I emphasise without thereby refuting the believer's faith in the historic fact of what others might assume is legend.

Scepticism often condemns legend as incredible. To the layman some scientifie pronouncements of the anthropologists also seem incredible and fantastic, yet, because they are "scientific" he admits them to be true. Approached with the same scepticism we have for myth we discover that our reverence for the scientist's conclusions is based on certain arbitrary tests and reconstructions of society's structure and the doings of human beings alive millions of Years ago, tests and reconstructions at least as questionable as blind faith in the scriptures.

Incomplete knowledge founded on scrappy data is more often than not the basis of the Scientist's judgment of the remote past. The scripture at least claims to be nearly as old as the events it narrates.

Take for instance the scientific assertion that St. Paul wrote only five (and not fourteen) Epistles, based on the "Computer Test Findings" of a Scottish Clergyman that the others are different in style. How flimsy an argument!
Does not our own style undergo great changes over the years? There is a lot in what Dr. John Lewis says in his "The Religions of the World made Simple" - "But legend after all is poetic history and may teach us more about the Buddha than the bare facts of his life." This is true of Christ, Krishna, ete.

"Myths to the Greeks were the living tissue that fleshed out the bare bones of their official religion," says LIFE International, dealing with "Greece". It is equally true of the Ancient Religion. Myths have great philosophical truths hidden in them. A colourful presentation of Indian philosophy is found in the Puranas (literally, "old ones") which are, unfortunately, in Sanskrit. Since it is no longer a common spoken language, we tend to ignore the fact that the names occurring in the scriptures have literal and significant meanings. Here are some:-

Isa (or Isvara) is perhaps just the verb of IS (Existence)! Perhaps it is derived from the same original root as Jesus, Jehovah, and Isis. Isvara is "Inner Ruler" - the Conscious-Power in everything.

Vishnu: All-pervading.

Vasudeva: One who dwells in everything - even in an atom.

Krishna: One who is dark, one who attracts, one who purifies.

Rama: In whom one rejoices or rests.

Siva: The abode of auspiciousness.

Narayana: The soul of all embodied beings, the inner Prompter, the Witness of all, also "Son of Man".

This is true even of Biblical names:—

Jesus: One who saves people "from their sins".

Christ: A Polish lady once told me that this. is to be pronounced "Hristhe" with a guttural sound. Hristha in Sanskrit means "dweller in the heart" - God!

All these are the attributes of the One God Whom we all adore. Myths have, thus, a dual role to play, as the repositories of philosophy in their esoteric form, and as the inspirers of wisdom and humanity in and through the narratives themselves.

Gods and Goddesses Who abound in the legends of the world are permanent images of philosophy. Today not only artists and poets, but also philosophers and psychologists are turning to Greek mythology for inspiration. Lord Russell emphasises the influence of Greek religion on Greek philosophy, and, through such philosophers as Pythagoras and Plato, on Christianity itself.

Language changes and words change their meaning, but myths endure. The myth is "perennial language", preserved and handed down from generation to generation, so perpetuating philosophie truths. Sooner or later, their message is decoded and the truths hidden in them re-discovered.

Let us consider for a moment the wealth and wisdom contained in a much disdained Indian tradition, worship of an animal-form. I refer to Lord Ganesha or Vignesha. These very words have simple meanings. Ganesha means "Lord of the tribe, Multitude of beings, or servants of the Lord". Vignesha means the Lord of obstacles or impediments who can avert them. These two names supplement each other beautifully. By enabling us to play our role in the community to which we belong and that is the object of our paying homage to the Chief), we have everybody's cooperation and all obstacles are removed. We also have the blessings of the Lord's servants.

Lord Ganesha is our First Lord of Auspiciousness. To ensure the successful completion of all undertakings, the Indian was asked to worship Him. The ancient sage who instituted this custom had greater insight into the springs of success than has the modern psychologist or expert business manager. Let us see how.

Ganesha is represented as an elephant-God and has a mouse for a vehicle. Strange that the mouse does not get crushed by His heaviness, and stranger still, one of His titles proclaims that He moves very fast. A puzzling statement! We have been given intelligence to understand it, not to dismiss it as absurd. Let us use it.

In the animal world, the elephant is regarded as a very wise animal. The mouse is a destructive creature and is perhaps the only one which destroys (paper, books and clothes) without reason, purposelessly and for the mere joy of destruction.

We have a mouse within ourselves. It is the doubting intellect, the doubting Thomas (Tamas, in Sanskrit, means "darkness' - the mouse is very active at night when it is dark, and even so is the intellect of an ignorant man!) The mouse destroys books just as his doubting intellect destroys all knowledge. It has no faith at all, and will not believe. With the incisive teeth foolish argument and wrangling, it tears everything. Its purpose is not to know or to learn, to gather and construct, only destructive argumentation gives it great joy. Yet the mouse intellect can never be destroyed! What shall we do? Unless the elephant of wisdom rides this mouse, governs it and guides it, it will ruin our lives, and push us into mess after mess in whatever work we undertake.

Why is the elephant regarded as a symbol of wisdom, power and strength? The elephant is the only animal which has its organ of action (the hand) growing out of its head! That is why it is wise. In our case, the brain (thought), the mouth (speech) and the hands (action) are at a little distance from one another. Hence, we find that men think one thing, say another and do something entirely different. Unless these three are integrated - as in the head of the elephant — we cannot attain success here, and we cannot become wise. Thought, word and deed must agree; then we are wise.

Again, the elephant is the only animal whose "hand" hides its mouth. We talk more and do less, therefore we achieve very little. Our deeds must be louder than our speech, then our words will have power.

That is the picture of the elephant-God (wisdom) riding the mouse (intellect). The mouse is not crushed, it is part of the picture; it cannot be. Just so, the intellect cannot be destroyed; but if it is governed, controlled and guided by real wisdom (whose main characteristics are sincerity truthfulness and practice), the very same intellect can and does become extremely auspicious and constructive. It takes us fast to the successful conclusion of all our undertakings.

Jung found in the myths symbolie archetypes of human response. Psychology draws great lessons from myths. That it should be "beyond argumentation". hypnotic or auto-suggestion, is important here: The suggestion should be "planted" in the mind and allowed to grow there.

The ancient Indian sage knew, too, that it was disastrous to encourage rationalisation of the deities, their forms and doings. Always it is the intellect, without the guidance of faith or wisdom, that clamours for such rational approach.
Rationalisation in its inadequacy might often undermine devotion, defeating the very purpose of the Ancient Religion. Sages, therefore, gave us the symbols, hymns and methods of worship. If we cultivate devotion and carry on that worship with faith, hidden truth will reveal itself when the time is ripe.

CHAPTER X

THE VEDA: THE HOLY BOOK OF INDIA

The first and foremost speech, O Brihaspati, that sages sent formulating their visions, — speech that was their best, was stainless — it revealed with love the Divine Mystery within them.

RG. VEDA.

Even the thought of such revelation thrills the heart. The Veda, acknowledged by even great Western scholars as the oldest scripture, has been preserved and handed down from generation to generation from several thousand years B.C. Indians believe that the Veda is the breath of God, and my own Master Sri Swami Sivananda supports this view and says, "The date of the Vedas has never been fixed. It can never be fixed." (All about Hinduism).

Professor Max Muller pays a glowing tribute to the Vedas —
"The Rig Veda is the most ancient book in the world. The sacred hymns of the Brahmanas stand unparalleled in the whole world and their preservation might be called miraculous."

The religion of India is based on the Veda. The Indian is firm in his conviction that "all other scriptures are subject to verification by the Veda. Any philosophy will be allowed to stand and flourish, but it must conform to the Veda."

"Veda" means "knowledge". Knowledge is eternal. Newton did not create "gravitation" but discovered it. It was there already and he merely removed the veil of ignorance that covered it. The great Truth revealed in the Veda is eternal. In the Veda it is unveiled, discovered, which the Truth has been presented and preserved (the hymns) is not thought to be of human origin. It was "seen" by the Rishi (the Seer) and recorded.

A thought occurs to us. Even as inspired thought occurs to the mind usually as a result of some self-effort preceding it. We desire to know; we strive; and the thought occurs to us. in spiritual revelation, this succession of events is absent. Even as, while you are reading this page, you are aware that it is distinct from you, and it is not a product of your thought, word or deed, so the Rishi perceives the Revelation deep down within himself, with the eye of intuition. He recognises its divine origin. He is not the author. He claims no copyright. It is a divine treasure, it is a property of the Divine, the Omnipresent God. Hence it is that I assert again and again that this religion does not
"belong" to the Indians, that this revelation is not exclusively for the Hindus — but is the pro. perty of the one who seeks it.

The Rishi and successive generations of seekers imposed upon themselves the sacred duty of preserving its purity and of handing it down to posterity exactly as it was revealed to the original seer. How did they achieve this? Their technique is clear. By appointing a section of the community (the Brahmanas) as the guards and preservers of this treasure. No pain was too great for them to learn, recite and teach it. There were no books; the scriptures had to be dentally, even today it is regarded as blasphemous to learn the Veda from a book; one may not learn the correct pronounciation, and thus the purity of the scripture may be lost. Such was their zeal in the preservation of the Veda.

The student learnt it by heart. He did not merely cram it. By a delicate, artistic and rigorous process of learning, he literally inscribed every hymn and every verse on the tablet of his heart. The Brahmana's duty was to recite the Veda (a portion of it) every day and there were special occasions during which it was obligatory upon him to do so. In spite of this, it might happen that sickness or other causes might prevent

him from reciting the Veda for a period of time. Yet, if it had been learnt by the proper method, it was impossible to forget it.

I have heard two of the Vedas being recited: The Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda. Even without understanding the meaning or the words, the mere vibrations, produced by them, the rhythm of their metre and the lovely harmony of their sound are so elevating that they compel us into self-forgetful contemplation of the Supreme Being they glorify.

Though tradition has it that the four were simultaneously "breathed" by the Creator Who has four faces, the Rig Veda is regarded as the most ancient of the four. It consists of hymns or Mantras. The Yajur Veda contains details of the various rituals that had to be performed by the community. Sama Veda was the first invocation set to music. Incidentally, Sama, psalm and song-do they not sound alike? They mean the same pattern. The Atharva Veda contains charms and spells for the fulfilment of various earthly desires, and Vedic historians feel that whereas the first three were Aryan in their origin, Atharva Veda was perhaps a sort of amalgam of Aryan culture and the glorious culture that existed in India itself when the Aryan settlers arrived. The Aryans were culture-conscious, but not class-conscious. 'Anything that they found useful and fruitful and which did not undermine true culture they made their own, thus conquering the world by assimilation, on the one hand, impregnation on the other, understanding being the catalyst. Exactly the same could be said about the then-prevalent Dravidian culture in India.

By great sages and saints like Sri Rama krishna Paramahamsa, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Swami Sivananda, and President Dr. Radhakrishnan, that Aryan spirit is continued even in our own times. They have, even as their forebears of ancient days, opened the door for the mutual flow ideas between religions like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc., and even between these and schools of scientific and philosophic thought. In fact that is what "Veda" really means. It is not a particular book, but "knowledge", though knowledge which is not merely the result of reasoning and thinking, for that circumscribed knowledge is likely to be tainted by imperfection and tinted by prejudice. Revealed knowledge of all kinds is Veda. That is why the Indian is not averse to studying the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (11.4.10) specifically includes even history and the

sciences in "the breath of God". Several savants in recent time have endeavoured to prove that the Vedas contain great scientific truths and that the ancient religion we are discussing is based on science. One of them is Sri Swam Bharati Krishna Tirtha, whose book "Sanatana Dharma" is a fascinating exposition of the scientifie bases for some of the much-maligned aspects of this religion.

Veda is not opposed to science: It includes science.

I do not wish to create the impression that all that is good and noble in the " Ancient Religion" is Aryan in origin! Far from it. Religion is not an enert, non-radiant, non-absorbent rocky substance! Religion is a living force and life is a perennial process of give-and-take. The Ancient Religion that I discuss here does not have a single original source. It has had many, tributaries: that is its strength and glory.

Scholars, as usual with their preoccupation with history and their own ideas of "proof" assert that the present-day Indian religion called Hinduism is in the main an amalgam of Aryan and Dravidian thought. Some even believe that the fourth Veda, the Atharvana Veda, is of Dravidian origin (not to be regarded as divinely inspired!) and that certainly, the Indian epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and also the Puranas or legends are of Dravidian origin. Maybe.

Who are the Dravidians? They who were in India before the Aryans came. Good! But the scholars do not stop there, but go on to ask the question, "From where did they come?" People are still labouring under the ludicrous notion that Man was born in one small village in Central Africa (or, as the Dravidian scholars have it, in the continent that now lies at the bed of the Indian ocean) and that as they multiplied they migrated! Every country, every landmass, that has existed from the time of creation has had life of some sort and Man obviously inhabited all parts of the world at the same time. And, that Man has his own religion, his own language and culture. Later, there have been small- scale and large-scale migrations which resulted in the fusion of several (not only two) cultures.
The Aryans as they travelled along Europe and the Middle East had not insulated themselves against the reception of religious knowledge from the natives of those countries: they gave and they took. It is not possible now to draw up an income and expenditure account to find out which way the balance lay. Nor is it possible now to

remove the Dravidian influence from Hinduism, nor the Aryan contribution: it is like a young man wishing to destroy the father (or mother) element in his body which is the product of the union of the two.

It is not impossible to accept the theory that the Aryan invaders conquered India. Nomadie tribes are usually more united (on account of the ever-gnawing sense of insecurity) and therefore stronger than "settled" communities who have the leisure and reason (wealth and jealousy to fight among themselves and grow weak. That is what happened to India when the European invaders came in recent history. It is quite possible that the conquered Dravidians accepted part of the religious beliefs of the conquerors. But evidence is largely to the contrary. The Dravidians accepted the conqueror's language (a common practice even today), but there may be a different reason-The Dravidian language, Tamil, was much more difficult than the Aryan Sanskrit-hence it was easier for the Dravidians to learn Sanskrit than for the Aryans to learn Tamil, in order to effect a complete integration of the two communities.

But in the field of religion it was the Aryans that were thoroughly absorbed. Temple (and therefore Idol) worship was Dravidian, obviously because they led a settled life; the nomadic Aryans could not afford it and therefore confined their worship to fire which could be (and had to be, for food) kindled every day.

The caste and the "stages-of-life" -systems that we shall discuss later were also perhaps of Dravidian origin, they needed settled life, whereas in nomadic life clear-cut division of labour is not always possible. Nor is there any evidence that the Aryans had these even in their: own Nordic homes, at least in the way in which it developed in later Indian religion.

Either these were of Dravidian origin or they. were evolved by fusion of cultures.

In praise of the Dravidians, a lot could be said. The urge to colonise is not born of a sense of superiority or of affluence, but of inferiority and poverty! True, when a race or a king is powerful a few people may invade a neighbouring state and conquer it; but large-seale emigration is the effect of poor climatic and living conditions. Cold elimate is not conducive to-cultural pursuits as much as warm climate. It is the wealth of India that tempted the invaders, ancient and modern; that the Indians were

"backward" and that the invaders came to uplift them is sweet bluff to camouflage villainy. In fact a great number of present-day (post-Independence) Indian scholars boldly claim that it was only after the Europeans had established colonies in the East that their own mother-countries became civilised: the inference being that it was the economic and cultural wealth of India that promoted the civilisation of the West and denudation of the East.

The Aryan settlers were totally absorbed by the local people, the Dravidians. The religion that was born of this fusion of cultures and thought-patterns contains in it the elements of dynamism and the world-and-life-acceptance of the nomadic Aryans and of the spirit of renunciation, asceticism and world-and-life negation of the settled Dravidians (it is noteworthy that Yoga, vegetarianism and other ascetic practices are also ascribed to the Dravidians) who sought to realise the Supreme Being here and now and not just earn a holiday in heaven, as the Aryans sought. Hinduism also absorbed the Dravidian Gods, Rama and Krishna (remember both were dark-skinned) and formulated the theory of the Avatara or Incarnation of God.

There again is a ridiculous notion that the Aryans hated the Dravidians and that the Vedic expressions "Asuras" "Dasyus" etc., referred to the Dravidians to fight whom the Aryans invoked the assistance of the Vedic gods. Nothing could be farther from truth: Asuras were people not with dark skins but with dark souls! These Asuras could have been found among Dravidians as much as amongst Aryans themselves. The Asuras, to my mind, were irreligious, ungodly, morally derelect, anti-divine peo-ple. The Aryans could not hate the people amongst whom they had come to settle: in fact, I am prepared to concede that they came to India as refugees (from the Ice Age cataclysms of the North) and not as invaders at all.

The Veda as it has come down to us today might also be of combined Aryo-Dravidian origin, though I leave dogmatic statements concerning this to our omniscient" research scholars! Part of the revelation could have come to the Aryans in the Arctic Circle and part of it could have come to the Dravidians in what is today the East and the Middle East: I do not have the authority to call the latter as "interpolations" fit only to be removed and discarded.
Divine Revelations never cease; God is not like the Broadeasting Station with a "closing time" Hence the Indian believes " Anantaavai Vedaah (Vedas are endless).

CHAPTER XI

CREATION, ACCORDING TO VEDA

All this, whatever moves in this unmoving world, is enveloped by God.

ISA UPANISHAD.

This apparently inert universe, this insentient matter, has puzzled scientists and philosophers alike. Scientists have wondered "what" it is, and philosophers have pursued the "why" of it. After centuries of such pursuit, we have gone no farther than the simple scriptural paradoxes! Such is the lure of knowledge and such is the compelling inner urge in Man to think, and to think logically, that he insists on unravelling this mystery with the only instrument he has, his own intellect, however imperfect and undeveloped it is.

The Rig Veda in a famous Sutra declares:-

"The non-existent was not, the existent was not. Then the world was not, nor the firmament, nor that which is above. How coul! there be any investing envelope, and where?.. How could there be the deep unfathomable water?"

(WILSON'S TRANSLATION).

Human intellect cannot possibly grasp the mystery of creation, for the intellect is limited to logical thought which operates on pairs of opposites. The word (or the idea) "existent" immediately suggests its opposite. The word "knolwedge" implies a knower, apart from it. Subject" is such only in relation to an object. One might logically arrive at the conclusion that before this diversity was created, one alone could have existed. The Rig Veda while conceding such a possibility ("That One unbreathed upon breathed of his own strength; other than That there was nothing whatever") and assuring us that "sages having meditated in their hearts have discovered by their wisdom the connection of the existent with the non-existent"

dramatically asks "Who really knows? Who in this world may declare it? Whence was this creation, whence was it engendered? The Gods; were subsequent to creation; so who knows whence it arose?"'

However, meditation and intuitive wisdom born of it enable us to perceive the "connection between the existent and the non-existent", i.e., the truth that they are one-the two poles of the one transcendent reality which is One and Many at the same item!

Yet it will not do to evade the issue of creation. We see in this world that all that exists: has had a birth. Therefore the universe as a whole, too, should have a birth. At least that is: what our reason infers and for which it demands confirmation. The Rig Veda provides an answer, in the graphic Purusha Sukta.

"Purusha is verily all this (visible world), all that is, and all that is to be; he is also the lord of immortality, for the mounts bevond (his own condition) for the food (of living beings)." This idea is echoed in Srimad Bhagavatham. God created the world in order that the individual soul might perfect itself. "Purusha, who has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thouexceeds it by a space mersuing ten rections, Here we have an idea which finds its parallel in the Holy Bible. God created the world. He created Man (i.e., the body of man) "out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul".

In other words, He Himself entered (as the breath of life) into the body of man. The Purusha Sukta, therefore, tells us that He has thousands of heads, etc., i.e., all these are His, the Indweller's. Though pervading all, He is not exhausted by them, for He exceeds the universe by "ten fingers" (obviously, a bit of healthy humour. Once it is recognised that He is "be that tone in is ten, ches on en billon milies

The world was created for the perfection (symbolically the food) of man; but why was man created? There is no answer. It is His Will. "Three-fourths of Purusha ascended; the other fourth that remained in this world proceeds repeatedly, and, diversified in various forms, went to all animate and inanimate creation". Here the Veda gives a different proportion, only one-fourth covers the universe and three-fourths remains "uncreated". This one-fourth is projected repeatedly.

We do not know if the universe was ever created ex nihilo! if we concede this, we shall be caught in the absurdity that before that hypothetical date in the far distant past, there was nothing (i.e. no universe) for ever and ever! Moreover, the effect is always in the cause. And, if matter was in God and was projected as the effect on a certain date, how was it possible for that hidden cause not to have materialised at all before that? Hence the Indian conviction that creation-dissolution, projection-absorption is an ever-recurrent cycle (Samsara) which is beginningless, but which will cease for the individual who transcends it by the realisation of the Absolute.

At the commencement of the creation of the universe in the beginning of each cycle (kalpa), from that one-fourth of the Supreme Being engaged by creation emerges the Viraja (the First Man of Cosmic Dimensions). From here onwards, it is scientific, psychological and moral unfoldment, graphically portrayed for easy comprehension.

To the discerning, the following description. is a soul-uplifting divine commandment to treat one's own life as an opportunity to sacrifice for the well-being of others, for we are told that Sacrifice gave birth to the universe. The Viraja or Virat Purusha allowed Himself to be sacrified The whole universe is nothing but a part of His own Body, and He allowed that unity to be cut up into infinite diversity in order that we —you and I—may live, enjoy and evolve into Perfection. Through self-sacrifice alone can Man save himself and become the saviour, (no more nobly illustrated than in the life of Lord Jesus) .

From that sacrifice were born the Vedas themselves, for knowledge is the fruit of self-sacrifice. All the animals (the animal-wealth) were born of that sacrifice. Even so were born men of different professions and natures. Thus are we reminded that all of them (human and sub-human beings) are but parts of the Divine Body, born of the sacrifice of the Supreme, with the sole purpose of evolving into Godhead.

"The moon was born from his mind". Psychologists and even medical scientists know that the moon and moon-phases exert a profoun influence on man's mind. Sir Bernard Lovel, working with the great Jodrell Bank radio telescope definitely asserts this, as a result of his studies of cosmic rays.

"The Sun was born from his eye". The sun "sees" the world, and so do the eyes!

"Indra and Agni were born from his mouth". They refer to the faculties of taste and speech respectively. "Vayu from his breath" —whose meaning is obvious (Vayu is wind).

"From his navel came the firmament, front his head the heaven was produced, the earth from his feet, the quarters of space from his ear, so they constituted the world"; We shall presently see what the three-fold division of the universe could have implied. Space (ether) was born of His ear, and sound-waves are known to travel in ether even today.

Thus was the universe born at the beginning of the Kalpa (Cycle). It is nothing but one-fourth of the Supreme Being. Since it is not full, it does not satisfy the soul of mau which is none other than the consciousness of the Supreme Being, deluded into limitation. Humanity is in the position of the true owner of an estate who is not satisfied when a usurper (here nescience) "grants" to him only a small portion, yet that part is not essentially different from the whole. The universe with all its diversity is nothing but God. All beings that dwell in it are His own "limbs" as it were. It is an inspiring thought.

CHAPTER XII

THE VEDIC RELIGION

The Divine is all this, that has been and that will be.

RG. VEDA.

From the day God created man and bestowed intelligence on him, he has sought God. This has been compared by our saints and sages to the attraction that iron feels for the magnet, and the seeds of the ankola tree for the tree itself (it is said that the seeds adhere to the trunk as they drop down). This is the only way in which the

Cosmic Being expresses Its Cosmic Unity. To give a crude illustration—a male actor plays the role of a female character. He stands in front of a mirror and is irresistibly compelled to visualise his own real form and figure! Self-realisation is the goal, for the simple reason that the Self alone is the Reality, the Sat.

This Sat has been viewed from different angles by different people. The indescribable has been described variously by wise men. The urge to do so is irresistible. The Vedas conta'1 many such picturesque descriptions. Now the Supreme Being is called Indra; again Mitra, varuna, Agni, ete. But the Vedic seers wert detnitely not polytheists nor were they primitive Nature-worshippers as some deluded "rationalists" regard them. If they were, would they declare in soul-stirring terms: "Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti» ("The Reality is One; the knowers of the Veda speak of Him variuosly") ?

The One Consciousness pervades the entire universe and It is the Reality in us too. In deep devotion when we pray to that Reality and, when the necessary self-forgetful rapport is establish-ed, the Reality responds to our prayer. The One God dwelling in the clouds showers rain on us.
He in the sun illumines the earth. He within the bowels of the earth makes it spin, bringing about day and night revolving around the sun, bringing about the changes of seasons. (The scientist is perfectly right in telling us that the clouds rain, the sun shines and the earth rotates, and in describing how these things happen; but he is unable to say "why", nor in the ultimate analysis, what that great power or intelligence is that brings about all these wonderful phenomena).

The Vedie seers visualised (God's) Nature as made up of three planes, (Elsewhere a list of fourteen planes is given; which is but an amplification of the original three). The Shatapata Brahmana declares, "There are three lokas (planes, worlds) —the world of men, the world of the manes, and the world of gods." The Atharva Veda makes the description a little more graphie: "This world of men is the feet, the world of manes is the abdomen and the world of gods is the head of That Being." These three planes were described and designated as bhuh, bhuvah and swah; or, prithvi, antariksham and divi; or earth (the world of men), the atmosphere (the world of the manes) and the solar region (the world of the gods).

Something very interesting emerges from this division. Were the Vedie seers conscious of the existence of these three distinct gravitational fields the gravitational field of the earth, that of the moon and that of the sun? In the Bhagavad Gita we have the mystifying description of the paths that souls traverse after leaving this earth. They who leave this earth by night, during six months of the year when the sun's rays are more slanting and therefore less powerful, are said to reach the path of the moon; they return to the earth. The souls that leave the earth during the day-time, and during the six months when the sun's influence is more powerful, reach the solar light, and, if they are knowers of the Supreme Being, will not return to this earth again, but will eventually attain union with the Supreme Being. (Of course, the sage of Self-realisation who meditates on OM, while leaving the body, attains liberation here and now).

When we meditate deeply over these statements it looks as though the Yogis of yore were in possession of psycho-physical secrets which enabled them consciously to project their subtle body. The denser ones just managed to get into the gravitational field of the moon. The less dense ones got into that of the sun, and the extremely subtle ones pierced even the solar orbit and passed into the Beyond. We come across a few great saints and Yogis even in recent times (Ramalinga Swami was one of them) who were able to convert even their physical body. into a mass of light and disappear immediate liberation). Obviously they knew the technique of "rocketing" the molecules of their body at the speed of light and thus converting them into light. However, if the necessary inner purity. and illumination have not been ageuired, this interplanetary levitation cannot be achieved. An interesting instance of this type is provided in the story of Trisanku. He is rocketed by sage Viswamitra with the intention of sending him to the solar orbit. Trisanku is too gross to get anywhere near it and is obviously hurled back to the earth!

That we do not know how this is done is no excuse for disbelieving in it. I do not know how the atomic bomb is manufactured; but I dare not disbelieve in its existence.

The consciousness or the aspect of the Reality that governed these planes was given the various designations Indra, Mitra, Varuna, ete.

Even though electricity is one, the functions it performs in and through a lamp, a fan, a refrigerator and a stove are different (and even: contradictory). God is One. He works (from the layman's point of view) through the sun, the clouds and the earth, creating, preserving and dissolving all living beings here on earth. We know that both the vegetable and the animal (including human, of course) kingdoms subsist because of the mysterious life-force they derive from the sun, clouds (rain) and the earth. The Indian sages "saw" not the effect (birth and growth), not even the immediate cause (the chemical components of water, earth, etc.), but the Great Intelligence hidden in these which organised these elements and bestowed upon them the power to act and react on one another in a manner best calculated to promote birth and growth. They realised it was One Power; else, harmony would be unobtainable and one element would militate against the other. But they also recognised the functional differences in the avenues of expression of that Power and called God-in-the-Sun "Surya", God-in-the-wind "Vayu", God-in-the-fire "Agni", ete.

This, again, is not a strange Indian concept. K. M. Sen says in his book on "Hinduism": "A comparison of the Vedas with the Iranian Avesta, the Greek and Roman literatures and even Teutonic and Nordie tales (for instance the Eddie poems) reveals striking similarity between their respective mythological beliefs. For Vedic god of the sky Dyaus is none other than the Greek Zeus, the Latin Jupiter, the old Norse Tyr and the old Teutonic Ziu. Apart from mythology, their views on life and death, the earth and the heaven, seem to have much in common."

We saw that the sages had "seen" that the phenomena around the earth could be broadly divided into three planes or layers-bhuh, bhuvah and svah. Each of these has its own specific characteristic. Bhu loka is the most substantial or solid of the three. It is the plane of "becoming"; that which is subtle in the other two has become gross here. The God who presides over the earth is said to be Agni or fire. Did those ancient seers know as the modern scientist knows that deep in the core of this globe on which we so complacently live, there is blazing fire of unimaginable heat? God dwells in our heart; and the earth's God dwells in the heart of the earth-and who is that? Fire. This Fire presides over the earth's atmosphere, too. Hence, rockets entering the earth's atmosphere too hastily (without reverence!) get burnt up. Hence, the Indians not only honoured fire but performed all their auspicious ceremonies in or in the

presence of the sacred fire (which, incidentally, shared the characteristies of the gross and the subtle and so symbolically formed the bridge between the seen and the Unseen). Spitting on fire, blowing fire out with the mouth, or desecrating fire in other ways is considered sinful; it is blaspheming against the Lord of the earth. When man reaches the journey's end on earth, his body is offered into the fire; the God he worshipped while he was alive delightedly accepts this offer.

The Vedas spoke of Agni or fire as Vaisvanara, "the divine being existing with all men" It is the same divinity that shines as the sun, also as lightning in the sky. Vaisvanara is the fire that dwells in the human organism, as the factor that caused the temperature of the body and as the gastric fire. They recognised that fire was born of water (lightning has the watery clouds as its source) without which food could not be produced on earth. Fire hidden in the earth aided this growth of food. And, finally, fire in the body cooked that food and digested it. They visualised the whole process as Yajna (sacrifice), a principle that was instituted by God Himself (as the Viraja Purusha we have discussed already) and that is indispensable for the preservation of beings in the world. Dr. Heinrich Zimmer says that "a knowledge of such affinities and inter-relationships constituted an important department of the earliest Aryan priestly wisdom. It might be described as a kind of intuitive and speculative natural science."

God divided into deities is only an attempt to overcome the inherent weakness of intellectual concept, an attempt to manifest inconceivable Truth in a form whose light will penetrate the barrier of the intellect and reach the conscíousness beyond.

Thus the bhuvar-loka or the lunar region is presided over by God-in-the-wind, Vayu. The Purusha Sukta which gives an inspiring picture of phenomena as springing from God says Vayu was born of the breath of God, and so becomes the giver of life. Because of this, he is given almost equal rank with the God of gods, Indra. He is often associated with Parjanya, the particular God-in-the raincloud, who by the way is also given equal rank with Indra sometimes. Wind is a close associate of the cloud that wafts the latter over the land and sea in order that the cloud may rain. Vayu is an element, extremely subtle, not to be confused with the gales and storms which are but its grossest manifestations. The Rig Veda gives them distinctive names: the Maruts, led by Matarisvan. In order to bring out the essential identity, however, the

Veda regards Marut also as the wind-God, saying they were children of Vayu. ayu in association with Parjanya rules the bhuvar-loka or the atmosphere above earth's own.

Vayu is also the life-force, Prana or the vital air. Therefore, it "carries" the soul to the lunar region when the body is discarded here. The progress beyond depends upon the purity of the soul and several other factors.

The svar-loka is the region of light or the sun. The symbolism used in describing the sun is surprisingly scientific. He rides on a: chariot drawn by seven horses-obviously an allusion to the seven colours of the spectrum. The driver of this chariot is Aruna or the Dawn.
The charioteer is without legs; he cannot stop the chariot and get away- and the chariot is: perpetually in motion. Suras or the devas or gods who dwell in this region are so called because they have bodies of light, without any shadow at all. From time immemorial Light has been associated with the highest Truth is covered by the golden dise of the sun and that once this dise is pierced Truth will be seen. The sun's twelve qualities are personified as twelve deities called Adityas. Some regard these twelve signs of the zodiac. What is of special interest to us, however, is the epithet "Mitra" by which the sun is known. He is the friend (Mitra) of all. This aspect again is specifically extolled in the Vedas. Mitra is the god who calls men to activity, who sustains heaven and earth (by attracting the planets to stay in their orbits!) and who beholds all creatures with unwinking eyes. Usually, however, Mitra is glorified in conjunction with Varuna.

Together they guard the world and promote righteousness. Mitra rules the day and Varula the night. But, in the Vedas, Varuna assumes great importance. (In the Gita, Lord Krishna specifically names the Sun and Varuna as His special manifestations). The root-meaning of the word. Varuna is "one that covers". He covers the earth with the darkness of night. The soul that is enveloped by the darkness of ignorance is caught in "the noose of Varuna" taken to the world of the manes and returned to the earth, for further self-purification before permitted to enter the higher region. You cannot deceive the all-seeing eye of God which Varuna symbolises. Darkness does not blind His vision nor does seclusion exclude Him!

God in his aspect of Mitra, the golden disc, the friend of all, beams upon all creation, but as not all His creatures are able to absorb all of Him, God in His aspect of Varuna, "one who covers", protects them from Himself

In his "Frontiers of Astronomy", Fred Hoyle suggests that the atmosphere of the earth gives it a green house effect, i.e. allows the heat of the sun to enter it, but does not allow the radiation of the earth to escape; if this were not so "the whole Earth would be plunged into a permanent glacial condition". He says "The gas of main importance in this respect is water vapour".

He adds "Our atmosphere provides a protective skin around the earth. Besides supplying the air that we breathe, it shields us from all harmful radiations, particularly from gamma: rays, x-rays and ultra violet light". All of which is a scientific description of Varuna.

Wonderfully, though even the light of the golden dise, fully absorbed, would annihilate us, we seek to find that which it itself hides. So sings the Isa Upanishad.

"The face of truth is covered with a golden disc. Unveil it, O Pusan, so that I who love the truth may see it. O Pusan, the sole seer, O controller, O Sun, offspring of Praja-pati, spread forth to may behold you of lost in. Whosoever is that person (yonder), that also am I".

The Atharva Veda explains how Varuna knows who is pure-hearted and who is not; "The mighty ruler of these worlds (Varuna) beholds as though from close at hand the man who thinks he acts by stealth; all this the gods perceive and know. If a man stands or walks or moves in secret, goes to his bed or rises, or what Barma knors, He is the third who s present This passage is worth meditating upon.

Varuna is even regarded as the King of gods: the same as Indra. This is neither confusion nor contradiction. The fact that one "deity" is called upon by several manues and that the function is said to be performed by several deities only proves that all of them eventually pointed to the same One God.

Mitra, Varuna, as also Indra (who is regarded as an overall king of all these gods) have general authority over the entire universe (consisting of the three planes). They answered people's prayers when they were addressed by the specific titles, they responded by manifesting the specific functions and blessed the praverful. (This is as simple as pressing a particular key producing a certain vibration or sound in a piano. The key is given a name). It is God associated with a definite function. The Kena Upanishads illustrate this through an interesting story.

The gods and the demons often wage war with one another, which philosophically symbolises the eternal conflict between good and evil. On one such occasion, when the gods as usual had ultimately triumphed, they prided themselves on their might. They had forgotten that the victory belonged to the Indweller, God. The Lord understood this, and wanted to quell this pride; God loves the good and therefore removes undivine qualities from their hearts iir His own mysterious ways. He appeared in front of them as a huge mysterious Being. The gods turned to Agni, the Fire-God and requested him to find out what this Being was.

Agni approached It. It asked Agni, "Who are you?" Agni explained that he was Fire and could burn up everything in the twinkling of an eye. It placed in front of him a blade of grass and said, "Burn this, then." Agni tried with all his might, but failed. Frightened by this failure, Agni ran away.

The gods then sent Vayu, the Wind-god, and he too suffered a similar fate at the hands of the mysterious Being. He tried with all his might, but could not shake the blade of grass.

Then they prayed to Indra, their chief, to find out what It was. When Indra went forward, that Being disappeared and in Its place was the Divine Mother, Uma, who enlightened Indra as to the identity of that Being. "It was God, Indra. The victory belonged to Him. All glory be to Him," she said.

Each of these deities presides over a plane of existence or a function of the human being. But the Vedic seers never allowed themselves to forget that eventually all these had to lead them to Self-realisation. For instance, Agni (Fire God) presides over the power of speech. (Hence, even in common parlance we refer to the fiery

speech of an orator). In the Veda (Taittiriya Brahmana) there is a Mantra: "Agni is in my speech, speech in the heart, heart in me, myself in the immortal and the immortal in Brahman".

All the functions of the human are the spokes as it were of the wheel of his personality whose hub is the heart, or life. Life itself is a function of the individuality (I) as it were. This individuality is based on the immortal (Soul).
This Soul is in essence Brahman or the Absolute or God. It is from Him that the Soul, the I, life and the various senses and faculties of the human being (and the deities presiding over them) derive their power. The Hindu never forgets It.

Yet, when it comes to prayer, the Hindu often invokes various deities, though he realises that these deities are aspects of the same God, Who is One. What is still more mysterious, he gets what he wanted!

An illustration may clarify his approach. Mr. Ram is the head of a family, works as a Judge of the High Court, is a tennis chaption and also an amateur actor. He has a son who te ais Advocate of the in high Court, also plays tennis and takes part in the drama along with his father.

In the Court, the son addresses his father, "My Lord" - he dare not say "Daddy, my, client is not guilty". At home, he does not say - "My Lord, I am going out for lunch today"
— he uses the familiar mode of address. At play, he regards his father as a companion or even as an opponent! In a drama, the father might play the role of the son's aunt, and the son would address "him" appropriately. One role is different from the other; and there is a mode of address and behaviour suited to each, which will be entirely out of place in any other.

Even so the Vedie seer used the various names of the One God and obtained from Him. whatever he needed. This effect was made possible on account of the intensity of his own faith and devotion. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna specifically declares, "Whatever be the form that the devotee wishes to worship, I confirm him in faith in that deity. He obtains from that deity whatever he wants, though all those blessings are bestowed on him by Me."

This faith and devotion acted as the switch, as it were, to bring into operation the particular aspect of electricity appropriate to the occasion. This is particularly true of the various mantras that we use. Each Mantra has a specifie power. In other words, it is a switch which releases a particular aspect of the electric power. Electricity is the same, but it does numerous jobs, often contradictory, producing the heat of the stove and the cold of the refrigerator. Each one has its distinct switch, which brings it into operation. The overall control is vested in the main switch which is directly linked to the Power Station.

In the same manner each of the gods has his own special power and a special way of invoking that power. The aggregate of these is the Personal God Who is directly linked to the Supreme Being.

All this knowledge was not superficial. It tore the veil of appearance and recognised the indwelling Spirit or Power. Mystic methods were invented to "propitiate" this Power.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOLY TRINITY

Thou art Brahma (the creator) and verily thou art Vishnu (the protector); thou art Rudra (the redeemer) and thou Prajapati (the Lord of beings) .

MAITRI UPANISHAD.

While listening to an illuminating talk by a Methodist Minister, explaining the Holy Trimity of Christian Faith, I was struck by its similarity with our own faith. The Father is the Creator; we call Him Brahma. The Son is the Redeemer; we call Him Siva. The Holy Ghost is the Preserver; we call Him Vishnu. The three are not three

different entities, but One. This truth is brought out in Indian philosophy through subtle but incisive logic: legends explain it in picturesque language.

Brahman or the Absolute is beyond description, one and indivisible. Leave It alone! You can neither comprehend It nor describe It. Maya or the illusory power of Brahman has infinite potentialities, all of them capable of being grouped generally into three Modes called Satva, Rajas and Tamas. To help understanding, I might give an illustration. Fire has light, heat and smoke. Maya has Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Satva is light, purity wisdom and divinity. Rajas is "heat" desire and activity. Tamas is smoke' ignorance, inertia and stupidity. All creation including the Trinity — is within the shadow of Maya.

The Satvie portion of Maya (the aspect which is all-light) gave rise to the manifestation of the Trinity. One can picture the ocean, disturbed. This disturbance generates currents and counter-currents. These cross-currents continuously, interminably, run into one another. One current can predominate but is always or intermittently under stress from one or both other currents. A crude illustration gives another aspect. Molasses in a sugar factory is again and again subjected to chemical action, each time becoming less sweet. So pure Satva may lose the whole sweetness of its purity. Likewise the other modes, Rajas and Tamas, in the constant stress, lose the essence of themselves.

The purest Satva is Vishnu; the Rajasie aspect of Satva is Brahma and the Tamasie aspect of this Satva is Siva. Now forget this and re-affirm that these three are One and One alone. There is no essential difference among them. They are all manifestations, as it were. of the Absolute Being.

Indian legend has it that the Trinity once took birth in the mortal world to test the chastity of Anasuya. Anasuya brought them together and they re-combined into One, Lord Dattatreya. This is a beautiful way of reminding us that the Trinity is One in Three or Three in One.

The symbolism is brought out beautifully in the Vedas. Brahma is "cosmic evolution", literally. The sages visualised it as a creative power of God. Of the Trinity, Brahma is hardly ever worshipped. A legend clothes this truth, but there is

no difficulty in understanding that. the worshipper, being himself created (born), concerns himself primarily with the two aspects of God he has to contend with, the Preserver, Vishnu, and the Redeemer, Siva.

In the Veda, Vishnu is an Aditya or "son of Aditi". Aditi occupies a remarkable position in the Veda. She is the Mother of all gods, the Supreme Creative (illusory) Power or Maya! Vishnu is Light, not the candle-light, but the Light that nourishes. Lord Krishna refers to this in the Gita: "I am Vishnu among the Adityas"!

This sustaining light is simultaneously in the three planes, the "lokas" of men, the manes and the gods. On earth it is manifest as fire, in atmosphere as lightning, in "heaven" as the Sun. To Vishnu as Trivikrama, are ascribed deeds. One was to measure all existence in three strides, as the Sun measures the world, rising, in the zenith, and setting.

The Brahmana, a portion of the Veda, poses a magnificent concept of Truth. Vishnu is Himself the sacrifice. The entire universe is the sacrifice of God. From this stems the concept. that God Himself appears as all phenomena and the objects of creation, "sacrificing" Reality to produce the illusion of the world.

So the universe has been built with sacrifice even as a house is built with bricks. Vishnu is the Preserver and the Sacrifice, the law that governs the universe. Truth reflects in every mirror, for us the mirror image is that only the spirit of self-sacrifice guiding mankind makes possible the sustenance of the world common weal.

Vishnu as a personal God is visualised as: holding a conch, a discus, ete. - all of them symbolic of some great Truth. The conch produces the "OM" sound — "the Word that was a God, the discus is called “sudarshana” which literally means "perfect vision" though it is visualised as a weapon. This weapon of perfect vision obviously annihilates imperfect vision of the Truth or ignorance! It is the Preserver's task to preserve righteousness on earth; to achieve this He incarnates Himself again and again. Legends describe ten (often twenty-four) of these incarnations which, by the way, also gives us a picture of cosmic evolution.

Siva does not so incarnate Himself. In the Vedas, this Member of the Trinity is hailed as "Rudra" and also as "Siva" , one superficially contradicting thr other. Rudra is “terrible or frightening”, Siva is "auspicious or pleasing"
That is just what Redemption is! To those who are voyaging across the ocean in a luxury liner, the ocean is delightful; when the ship is sink; ing, how different this liquid death looks! To the good man Redemption is most welcome and auspicious; to the evil-doer, death is terrible.
Another interpretation is that "Siva" literally means "in whom all things lie", i.e. God in Whom all find rest. He is a Destroyer, only in so far as Redemption involves Destruction, but as a Redeemer He is Protection too. The role of Siva drinking poison to save the world from destruction underlines this truth.

Thus the Transcendental Reality is first conceived of as a cosmic Personal God and then shown to be a God full of compassion for all creatures, who actively participates in the protection and redemption of all.

The One appears as many. The One plays many roles. The One is worshipped in many ways. The One is approached from diverse angles. Hence, the Vedas proclaim: "The Unborn is manifested and understood variously": The unborn child is unrelated to anyone; but the moment it is born, it is son to its father, brother to its brothers and nephew to its uncle.

Him we adore in all, as all, and ultimately as the all-in-all. The grandeur of the Indian concept of the Ultimate Reality is thrillingly summed up in the bold utterance: "That thou art" "You yourself are That!" "I am That Supreme Reality".

This superb declaration, this clarion call to all humanity, this transcendent harmony of all vibrations, is proclaimed in the Upanishads, the last part of the Vedas.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF LIBERATING TRUTH

"All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without the mind. So long as they are not actually perceived by me or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit."

BERKELEY.

Here is the Last Word of the Vedas, the Greatest Truth:—

"All these gods, these five great elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether), all these small creatures, and these others, the seeds of creation, the beings born of egg, those born of the womb, and the others born of sweat, plants, horses, cows, men, elephants, whatever else which breathes, and moves and flies, or is immovable — all these are guided by Consciousness; and are supported by Consciousness; the universe has Consciousness for its guide; Consciousness is the basis or stay of all. Verily, Consciousness is the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality", declares the Aitareya Upanishad.

It is towards this grand goal of human existence that the hymns and rituals of the Vedas lead. All the forms and formalities lead to the Ultimate Truth which is declared as Consciousness. This Consciousness "dwells" in all and is all, in It there are no distinctions between animate and inanimate nature. Though the entire universe or creation is aglow with this Consciousness, It Itself transcends even that creation.

This Consciousness is the "unified field" towards which the modern scientists are working; whether they will be able to reach it with their finite instruments — for their finest, the intellect, is itself finite — is for time to prove.

This is the Realisation or direct immediate experience in which even the subject and object fuse into one. Our sages and Yogis did not stop with the statement "I experience that Consciousness", as though the subject is the experiencer and that Consciousness was apart from him — even as this paper is different from your eyes. Consciousness has no "differences". It is the One, in which there is no distinction of subject and object; no 1, you or he; no here or there.

"That which is the subtle essence, in that all that exists has its Being. That is the Truth. That is the Self. That thou art", declares the Chhandogya Upanishad. The Guru instructs here; "You, O disciple, are non-different from That Consciousness. When you have shed the scales of ignorance, then you will experience the Truth, that you are not the body, finite mind and intellect nor the self-arrogating ego, but you are That Consciousness"

The wise discipe meditates and realises, am That Consciousness". This is the declaration of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Even this formula is in dualistic language, for language or expression is always dualistic. The experience of oneness is not capable of being described in words. Just as you cannot even describe what you experience when you eat sugar candy. You may say, "It is sweet". You pre-suppose the other man has tasted something which is sweet and he can guess what your experience is, but you have not expressed your own experience. When such is the case even with worldly experiences, how about experiencing and expressing the extremely subtle Truth which is
Consciousness?

Hence, the Vedas exhorted all those who would want to attain this supreme experience to purify themselves, to steady their mind and to learn the art of meditation, assuring all that in the fullness of time, everyone will experience this Truth, without need for explanation. This is true of physical science just as it is true of physical science just as it is true of spiritual science.

In the words of Aldous Huxley: "It is only by making physical experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of matter and its potentialities, and it is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of mind and its potentialities. In the ordinary circumstances of average sensual life these potentialities of the mind remain latent and unmanifested. If we would realise them, we must fulfil certain conditions and obey certain rules, which experience has shown empirically to be valid".

Who is daring enough to listen to this call? We aspire to be swimming champions but we refuse to enter the swimming pool before we can swim. We are not prepared

to take the preliminary steps, and we say, "Prove that I will remain afloat and will be able to swim, before I agree to enter the water". We will never learn to swim and will perhaps die grumbling that all this talk about swimming is pure non-sense, even as the atheist or materialist might say today that all this talk about God or an. Ultimate Reality is hallucination. Come, jump in and learn to swim in this ocean of Consciousness.

The Vedas paint a sublime picture of Creation, but quickly reveal the Truth that the-painter, the canvas, the variegated colours, and the observer of the portrait — are "all" one Consciousness.

CHAPTER XV

CREATION VERSUS ILLUSION

"Gradually philosophers and scientists arrived at the startling conclusion that since every object is simply the sum of its qualities, and since qualities exist only in the mind, the whole objective universe of matter and energy, atoms and stars, does not exist except as a construction of the consciousness, an edifice of conventional symbols shaped by the senses of man".

LINCOLN BARNETT in "The Universe and Dr. Einstein,"

Physics stops with the analysis of "matter". and that is its proper realm. The ultimate in physics is energy which is extremely subtle matter. The dividing line between matter and energy, has nearly disappeared.

Less dense, or rather subtle, energy binds tegether more dense energy. The physicist is satisfied with this much and turns a deaf ear to the question: "Why are there two forces in the atom - the electrical force which attracts the positively charged protons and the negatively charged electrons towards each other, and the nuclear force which binds together several positively charged protons in the same nucleus?"

"That is how it is", says the scientist, "we are not interested in the question — why!" The philosopher sees in this arrangement the hand of Mighty Intelligence. He introduces the third element, consciousness, to the scientist's duality of matter and energy, but quickly absorbs these two into the One Consciousness.

The sages have analysed all matter and reduced it to the three modes of nature - Satva Rajas and Tamas. The scientist, too, has analysed all matter and arrived at the dead-end of three (electron, proton and neutron). They have used different terminology — perhaps to refer to the same principles. Let us assume that:—
Satva is neutron.
Rajas is proton.
Tamas is electron.

(a) Satva is purity, light — close to God or the Ultimate Reality. Because of Satva the cosmos has stability and is held together. Even so, within the nucleus, the neutron holds the atom together.

(6) Rajas is the active principle. It compels activity. It keeps everything in motion. Similarly, protons have a positive electric charge and keep the electrons dancing around.

(c) Tamas is inertia, darkness or stupidity which creates illusion and delusion (with the help of Rajas). The electrons are the building bricks of the material universe.

(Some mystics interpret Satva, Rajas and Tamas as Law, Energy and Inertia.)

The phenomena themselves are not complicated. All substance is, (we know "scientifically"') differentiated by the number of electrons and protons. Dancing electrons, elusive and perhaps delusive as well, create it in combination with protons, in the form of molecules.. Even as Tamas is intractible and difficult to overcome and conquer, the individual electron is impossible to analyse and locate. It was first deduced only by the supposition that it was there.

The nuclear scientist Oppenheimer says that within the nucleus, protons and neutrons are sometimes interchanged. Protons become neutrons and vice versa. This

is also true of Satvai and Rajas. Only the dynamic man (and not a lazy man) can sublimate his dynamism (Rajas) into purity (Satva) and become a saint. A saint who is full of Satva is also dynamic in unseltish activity.

Again, it is the neutron that is used in breaking other atoms to create nuclear power; for the simple reason that because of its neutral electric charge, it will not be attracted or repelled by the other atom. Even so, it is only Satva (which is free from the Tamaso-Rajasic impulses of love and hatred, likes and dislikes) that is capable of piercing the veil of ignorance and enabling us to see the Light of Lights, God, and share His Power.

An atom with these three fundamental components has the power to blow up a whole city.
This is Shakti Power. But this power does not get released haphazardy! Because, in each one of these atoms dwells God or Chit (Consciousness wlich governs this power, keeps these three elements together, brings about differentiation and is thus responsible for the manifestation of the Universe. That consciousness is the Reality. The Ultimate Reality is the consciousness within each atom of existence-perhaps within the neutron, proton and electron. It is velled by appearance or Maya: the universe of names and forms is the result.

In the realm of inanimate matter one plus one equals two, but in the realm of sentience or life one plus one equals - ? — Infinity? God plus Maya, Man plus Woman, Reality plus appearance. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. An idea is built up of its component thought, but it is not the sum of their addition one to the other, the Ultimate Idea is the uncountable, the Reality, God.

Can this Reality hidden in the atom be perceived by the senses or any physical instrument? Unlikely. As Zimmer admits that science cannot go further than it has and cannot even prove an isolated electron, even so, Lord Krishna makes this dramatic declaration in the Gita: "I (God) am not apparent in this universe, though I pervade all, because I am surrounded by Yoga-Maya."

Yoga is union; Maya is illusion. Yoga-Mayar is illusion caused by the union of these three elements of Satva (neutron), Rajas (proton) and Tamas (Electron). So long as

we are busy analysing the phenomena composed of these three, so long shall we be away from the Reality, the Consciousness-Power within them, which is also behind the intellect of the scientist and the metaphysician. It is to that within that one points as the "I".

The word universe points to one, and this alone convinces us that the stuff of which the entire universe is made is the same, and throughout we find Power and Consciousness, which pervade everything. All things can ultimately be broken down to Power (Life), guided by Consciousness. These seem to be the Ultimate, but that is not so. There cannot be two masters. What happens if Power disobeys Consciousness and what happens if Consciousness misuses Power? In Indian mythology, Shakti, which is Power, is regarded as the female aspect, and Shakta (or Siva) which is Consciousness, is regarded as the male aspect of the Cosmic Being. These are not separate entities but are one. In India this is symbolised in an idol in which one half has the male form and the other half the female form, Ardhanareeswara.,

Siva and Shakti are not separate entities but are one and we come to the conclusion that what exists is "conscious power" and not consciousness and power.

The entire universe can be reduced to Chit-Shakti, Conscious-Power. This is the one and the only power that exists. Even the word "individual" points to this truth. It is the telescoping of two words indivi(sible) dual.

We have fallen into the habit of thinking in terms of subject-object relationship. In the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna describes Matter (or Power, or Life) as the "field of knowledge" or the object. It is noteworthy that these had more or less been described earlier as "My inferior Nature" (i.e., the Nature of God). He then describes Himself as the Witness-Consciousness or Knower of the field in all of them. One (He) alone exists: Matter, Power or Life is His own Nature (or Body) and He Himself is the Indwelling Intelligence or Witness-Consciousness. This happens even in our own personality, looking at it empirically. When there is pain in the eye, the intelligence within treats it as an object in pain, and hence we are aware of the pain. Whereas, in normal circumstances, that eye would be regarded as part of the subjective intelligence itself, becoming aware of the objects of the world

it perceives. The distinction between this intelligence and this power or life, therefore, is a play of words.

The two, matter and soul, life and spirit, Chit and Shakti, are indivisibly one. That is the ultimate point of synthesis. This Chit-Shakti has always existed and from this point of view, there has been no evolution. Nothing has ever taken place. This is the standpoint of Gaudapada and Vasishtha.

FredHoyle, astronomer and scientist, supports this view when he says that this universe has had no beginning at all and that it has always been essentially in the same state. He feels that rudimentary hydrogen is being constantly recreated all over the universe, created, not out of nothing, but by reduction of the complex to the simple!

Perhaps the hydrogen atom being the lightest (with atomic weight one) is the indestructible and immutable finale and when all other atoms are somehow "destroyed", they reduce themselves to the ultimate irreducible hydrogen atom. This rudimentary hydrogen exists today as it did millions of years ago, before by permutation and combination the other elements were evolved. So in fact this alone exists now--in the other combinations.

This alone will exist when the other elements are destroyed, and the cycle is completed. The whole thing will then be broken down again to the rudimentary hydrogen! Hence, argue Gaudapada and Sri Krishna-only it exists even now, though in different apparent combinations.

This is supported by science, too. The scientist's own viewpoint is that only this rudimentary matter exists even now, though it appears as the different molecules, elements and, therefore, objects. From this angle of vision, there has been no change, no evolution.

That which has been evolved by the combination of several other things is not the Ultimate Reality-for it is still reducible to its own components and the combination took place (creation) and will come to an end (destruction).

Gaudapada declares: "That which is nonexistent before and after, does not exist now, either. Thus, the worldly objects which are illusion merely appear to exist".

Sri Krishna provides the positive aspect of this truth in Srimad Bhagavatham XI. 19/7.
"O Uddhava, this threefold modification (birth, existence and death, or body, mind and senses) that arises in you is an illusion and is not real; because it appears in the middle (now) only, and not in the beginning nor in the end. These states of birth, death, ete., do not touch the substratum (the Self, Which alone is real). That (the Self) which was, is and will ever be, alone is the Reality".

Yoga-Vasishtha supports this theory. Vasishtha says that nothing happens in this universe! Let us take an illustration. Seen through a microsaged the einst vity. But look at it with the naked eye. It is a placid piece of leather, smooth and inert. Similarly, when we take a narrow view of this universe, we see a lot of activity, creation and evolution. If you place.

The Reality is unchanging, but the appearance changes. Maya is the name of this power of change. Maya means "something which does not exist' , a conundrum meaning "I don't know". How can a "thing" not exist? In such statements of self-concealed fallacy, the sages hit the key to the reality which can the be attained by the perverted intellect nor the mature soul, but only by the discriminating.

We have just seen that Chit-Shakti exists.; If all of us are Chit-Shakti, if all of us are atoms, how is it that you are different from me? Pursuing this question to its logical conclusion, we shall come to a deadend. Just this has happened in nuclear research. All that science has discovered is that there are electrons, protons and neutrons in an atom, but the actual velocity and position of the individual electron is mere conjecture. It seems impossible to ascertain. Zimmer claims that even a perfect apparatus will not enable us to pass this barrier. We cannot locate and isolate the electron. The moment a light-ray touches an electron, it is displaced. Similarly, the moment we turn the Light of Consciousness upon this illusory feature, Maya, we discover that it shifts and we do not see it, and therefore this riddle of the universe can never be solved.

One of the greatest scientists, Max Planck, admits that "Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve."

This nature is also referred to as Samsara (world-process) the eternally revolving wheel of form. It is beginningless! Yet, in its ipmact on the human soul, it does exist. One cannot lightly brush it aside. According to the view of one school of philosophy, this Samsara is nothing but the fruit of the Karmas (actions of countless souls). As a plain statement of truth, it is perfectly clear. A city exists only as the fruit and the labour of millions of men, women and animals. Action or activity sustains this universe or Samsara. Action leads to reaction, to its reaction and so on.

All these are projected on to the subtlest form of matter. It vibrates, producing the various forms demanded by the Karmas of countless souls. This samsara refers to the subtle universe of vibrations. This vibrations itself is cosmic Karma. It is constantly renewed by the actions of living beings - hence the word rats, ste this mis cont that
Vibrates, witnessed by chit or cosmic consciousness at various levels.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CREATION MYTH

The stuff of the world is mind-stuff.

PROF. EDDINGTON.

The human mind, delving deeper into Itself, has at one level fabricated the Creation Myth, endeavouring to express the inexpressible that lies still deeper in the profundity. All the individual mind can conceive is "That Thou Art!" but even this is not possible for all, or all at once. To the majority it is incomprehensible philosophy.

Reality must be proved from everybody's point of view, for only then can it be established, and everybody enabled to rise to the plane of the Absolute which is the fundamental aim of all. philosophy.

Stepping down from the pedestal of the Absolute, we accept that there has been some form of creation-real or illusory. In a questionable way, it is possible to speak of or describe the creation (origin), preservation and destruction (end) of the mirage in the desert, which springs from the desert, exists in it and disappears into it. All the time there was nothing but the desert. To satisfy the foolish curiosity of intellectual babies, scientists invent theories about this optical illusion-and assert that the "illusion" exists, though no one has as yet quenched his. thirst in the mirage. Trading on immature credulity, several institutions have sprung up to sing the glories of this illusion. To such-as to a trickster who makes a living by sleight of hand —an intelligent or rational analysis of this "creation" and pursuit of Truth, is disastrous and suicidal. Hence, all cults and institutions —social, political or religious- which flourish on this illusion rebel against any enquiry into Truth.

Science weaves web after web of "scientific" theories, discoveries, inventions and terminologies, but only to hide the chasm of ignorance over which its edifice is built.

Even philosophers shy away from the sacred project which would naturally silence them for ever! The sages of India have, however, boldly faced the Truth even if, thereby, they had—

(1) to forfeit the privilege of weaving a colourful fabric of philosphy with the thread of illusion, and

(2) to confess their inability to "describe" the Ultimate Reality, or the why and wherefore of this diversity which, in the words of Gaudapada, "Is incapable of comprehension, because it does not have a cause-and-effect relationship".

The Keality is beyond comprehension, yet the curious mind clamours for an explanation! The sages, like the scientists, paint a picture, rational, logical, appealing and often romantic; and here perhaps Srimad Bhagavatham is unsurpassable. You cannot study it without being struck by the sagacity of the author. You have

inspiring, amusing and entertaining stories and suddenly, like a bolt from the blue descends tough philosophy, which, however, is immediately followed by another titillating story! Here there is a vivid description of Creation-not even the slightest detail is omitted. It ends with the declaration that all this is perceived only by the ignorant caught in the deluding powder of God (Maya)! Markandeya's experience of the Lord's Maya. in which he lived through the dissolution of the world, etc., is revealing. All took place in the sage's mind and appeared to cover aeons- but it was all delusion! Nothing but God exists.

The scripture helps baby-souls. In order to help man rise to the Absolute plane, we are given another set of imagery or symbols. Lord Vishnu (don't forget that the word means "all-pervading spirit"!) is portrayed as a blue-bodied person. The blue-colour is used to remind us that it is like the blueness of the sky, a painting of the Infinite. To the earnest spiritual aspirant who has tried to meditate on the forms of the gods painted blue, the magic of this blue is revealed. As he meditates on the blue-coloured God, gradually the outlines of the Form disappear, leaving a radiant, luminous, blueness—a foretaste of the Infinite! Vishnu is conceived of as a blue-bodied person. A Person! The root word is "persona", which means a mask. We fix our mind upon this mask and eventually the fire of meditation removes it, revealing the Hidden Truth. To conceive of him, we must have the form or Persona of God like us-and yet not like us, so we give him a few more hands making him a little different from us, and the esoteric significance of the number of hands and the objects they hold serve as a notebook to remind us of His qualities. If the deities were visualised as entirely different to us we would not want to go to them. A wrist watch visualised as the ultimate Reality or God would be meaningless!

Vishnu is asleep on an ocean of milk! If you find this absurd think of our galaxy, named even by the scientist "the Milky Way". Even he says our solar system is part of this ocean of milk. In Sanskrit Scriptures you have the same concept, the Ksheera-Sagara, the Ocean of Milk,
and the stars and planets are said to be the various parts of the body of a Cosmic Person.

This image of the Cosmic Person in liquid occurs in the Bible, "In the beginning the Sprit of God moved upon the face of the waters". Again, in Egyptian mythology

"before Creation there lived in Nun, the Ocean, a spirit called Atum, who bore within him the sum of all existence". The Bible concept, the Egyptian myth and Indian thought are one.

One step further in this imagery which marks out our way. Vishnu is resting on a serpent couch. The cobra is a dreaded poisonous snake, sometimes portrayed with five hoods, sometimes with a thousand. The "hoods" are the five elements, space, air, fire, water and earth. A "thousand" is a manner of saying "infinite".

The snake, representing evil in his poison, is also the only creature whose motion of gliding is continuous and uninterrupted. Time has this quality of motion, and therefore in Indian and Biblical mythology, the serpent often represents Time. Time is also poisonous or evil, for its motion "kills" us in its every fleeting moment. "We die a thousand deaths?*

Bhagavatham (XII-II|13) says that the serpent represents the Unmanifested or Root-matter. Taking the hoods as representing the root elements (unmanifested), infinite potentiality for manifestation in infinite diversity is clearly also represented by the serpent. The keriptures, however, boldly and often identify the Lord and his serpent couch. Balarama is said to be the Incarnation of the serpent and Krishna of the Lord, but often they are glorified as One. Thus it follows that Krishna or the Lord Himself is described as the Time-Spirit.

The picture is of God (or Chit-Shakti) resting on Time (or root-matter). Then He opens his eves. Thus Vishnu awakes and Creation begins. Vishnu is conceived as male, the Supreme Consciousness. Shaktki, the power of his consciousness, as female, yet part of him. Neither of itself creates but together they are Brahma, the creator. This Brahma is said to spring from Vishnu's navel, a poetic concept which may dimly refer-to the explosion in the centre of the Super-Atom of scientific theory.

A father has never given birth to a child since the differentiation of sex, but in primitive forms of life (nearer the Creator!) there is parturition by partition. So the point of final separation from the parent is still the navel! Thus we have the vision of the umbilical cord from Vishnu's body going up, holding Brahma on a full-blown lotus. The full blown lotus represents unfoldment, or manifestation, "the expanding

universe". Brahma as the cosmic creator, has four heads, representing the four quarters or directions of the universe.

Brahma meditates upon the Lord Who bestows upon Him memory of the previous creation, and it then becomes easy for Brahma to recreate the whole universe, with the help of Time, the elements, the gunas, and the Chit-Shakti (which infills every being as the living soul), through the process known as quintuplication (Panchee-karana).

Water or liquid seems to have been a fixation with all people who have brought forth theories of creation. In Assyrio-Babylonian myth it is said that there lived in the ocean before creation a being called Atham (compare with Atma and Atun). There were two types of oceans, a calm ocean and a turbulent ocean (consciousness and power, Siva and Shakti respectively). When they collided, creation took place. (Indian mythology believes that the ocean was churned—a nice way of colliding, perhaps). First Lakhmu and Lakhamu were born (compare with Lakshmi of Indian mythology, who rose from the ocean when it was churned).

This cosmie "ocean" is literally true in a very subtle but real sense. For, even now we are swiming in an atmosphere of moisture, not dense enough to drown us, but enough to keep us from being burnt to death. No wonder our ancients used it as a symbol of a cosmic storehouse of hidden matter and life, as they had seen that the calm surface of the ocean hid beneath it countless living beings.

Nearer still, even in our body! This is how the scientist describes the structure of our body:—

"The fluid that bathes each cell, the liquid part of blood and lymph, is mildly salty. reminiscent of the sea water that nourished the sea-going creatures from which man evolved."

LIFE. 11th February 1963.

In other words—the body itself is a miniature sea in which millions of cells are swimming. Or, the "I" is swimming in an ocean even now!

Philosophically, water symbolises "mind", the Cosmic Mind. The symbolism is effective. Beings can exist in it at all levels (conscious and unconscious). Beings can live and yet be submerged. All these we find in the universe.

Chit-Shakti has always existed. Cosmic Consciousness with the manifestation-potential, life-potential, power-potential (whether this is latent or patent) is the Reality. This is viewed and expressed variously. "The manifested and the manifold universe is the effervescence of the inherent bliss of the Absolute", says His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore; and the idea of " the siene" postulato be an “expanding universe" symbolised in the full-blown lotus.

Even the Biblical declaration that God created the heaven and the earth, if it is read with faith in His omnipresence, points to the same conclusion that this "creation" is, unlike the potter creating a pot (outside himself) with the help of mud (again, outside himself), a manifestation of Something which existed and exists within Him.

Put as a simple question no one can convincingly answer-How does a mustard seed differ from barley? How are the characteristics of the huge banyan tree hidden in the minute seed, yet capable of preventing it from growing into some other tree? Is it not the only answer (on the analogy of a microfilm and the huge picture projected on to the cinema screen) that the whole tree is in the little seed already? The tree in the seed is an idea. The world in God is an idea!

The entire universe is nothing but the crystallisation of the inherent Power (call it Life) of the Cosmic Consciousness; God's Thought (call it Word) made Form by the Energy or Life which is His own outer nature (described as the Para or Superior and the Apara or the Inferior Nature, in the Gita).

God Himself is not limited by the creation nor has He undergone the least diminution in conse. quence. In dream, the dream-objects are in your own mind-created out of your mind-stuff; and this creation does not take something away from you. Even when the dream-objects are destroyed, you lose nothing, either. You create the dream within yourself and while playing a part in it, stand apart from it as a witness, too! That is precisely the relation of God and the World. The creation is in Him, of Him, non-different from Him, yet unreal, dreamish, an illusion of which He is the

witness. It is in this dream that diversity "exists". Diversity is an illusion caused by a power whose nature we do not grasp, and which, in the words of the scientists quoted above, it is impossible to understand.

From the point of the Absolute or God, there is, therefore, no evolution, creation or anything. except That. Vasishtha compares perception of the universe of diversity to the blue dome that: covers this earth. We know that it is not a blue dome, yet our eyes see it as such. It is not even an "illusion" (like the mirage) which will disappear. It is the sky and not the dome. It only demands proper understanding. What exists is God or Brahman and not diversity. That is all -and here there is no appearance nor disappearance.

Vasishtha and Gaudapada (the grand-Guru of Sri Sankara) assert that the Self alone is real and refuse to think of the world—for thinking can only be of the dome!

Sankara, however, provides a threshold to this mansion of Truth, in his Mayavada or the theory of illusion or relative reality of the world. Creation is like a long dream-unreal, yet temporarily and in the dream-state, real enough! Srimad Bhagavatham X. 86 44.45) adds the details to this theory, by saying that just as a man creates in his own mind the dream-objects and "enters" into those objects, giving them "life", He has projected this world in Himself, as His dream, and has entered it as the soul of each dream-object. We should regard the names and forms in the universe as such—as dream-objects and, absorbing our whole being in God, we should forget this illusion. The only difference between the Ajatavada (no-creation theory) of Gaudapada and Vasishtha, and the Mayavada (illusion theory) of Sri Sankara is this: The latter says that the illusion will disappear on the dawn of Jnana, whereas the former says that we are forever in the midday of Self-luminous Brahman and that there is nothing else to disappear.

To regard the visible as illusory hurts our intellect! Yet wisdom lies that way. You know how some people struggle to prove that a bygone civilisation did actually flourish once? Even so, a few thousand years hence, people will be questioning the veracity of present-day occurrences. A nuclear war or a natural cataclysm (like an earthquake) might wipe out the museums and monuments that we erect to let

posterity know what we have done! The truth about these can never be conclusively established, because they exist only in time, a mode of the mind, and not in Eternity.

The truth about the past can only be conjectured now—a process which is no better than the play of the mind, the mind playing in supposition, dreamlike, over the few "facts". Thus, everything that takes place in time (subject to birth and death, creation and destruction, appearance and disappearance) is non-truth. It is, therefore, better to ignore it, rather than break our heads establishing or refuting it. Hence, Krishna says: "He (the Sanyasi or seeker after God) should not regard this visible world as real because it is perishable-think no more about it." (Bhagavatham XI-18|26-27).

You will agree that it is a wise way of disposing of a big problem (head-ache!) Better utilise the time and energy in re-discovering Reality. The theory of "no-creation" seems to be shocking to the modern realist who is tempted to stamp as a fool he who declares the world to be an illusion. But, among its adherents are some of the noblest of men! They did not plunder, kill, burn, hoard or wage wars, because the world Hid not exist for them-who would want to assassinate a shadow? On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that he who affirms the reality of the world becomes worldly-soon the toil for the bread occupies all his time and attention-money, the ruling power in this reality, becomes the object of his quest, acquisition and accumulation–he recognises the Kingdom of God as a, political empire and wages wars to establish it and expand it—he evaluates the strength of his religion on the basis of the objects of this world (his reality), such as men, money and monuments; after thus travelling far out into the desert, he suddenly recollects that roaming in
car behind. Adopting the ‘illusion” theory compels man to face God all the time and live in His Light.

Some fear that this might lead to a lop-sided development of personality. A Muslim-brother once told me that meat-eating was encour gec by them because they want both the disine (Satvic) and the aggressive (Rajasic) aspects of man's personality to be developed-the meati providing the food for the latter. This view ignores the highly significant and pertinent truth that the aggresive (Rajasic) nature in us needs no food at all, for it is overwhelmingly powerful —a power brought forward from previous animal incarnations. The sincere seekers struggle all the time is to keep it in check and to promote the Satvie aspect of his personality. Even so, this "life-and world-

denial" will not lead to stagnation in personality-development or social progress; the power of Maya, latent in all, the "life" invested in the dream-objects by the dreamer, the Shakti of the Chit will ensure that. The powerful delusive potency of this Maya, when countered by an almost equally powerful "life-and world-denial" will eventually find the correct balance which will invest life and society with wisdom and the correct perspective of life and the saner sense of values.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CREATION MYSTERY

My womb is the great Brahma; in that 1 place the germ; thence, is the birth of all beings.

GITA.

The Upanishads are terse philosophical revelations. They state that in the beginning one Consciousness, and one only existed. "He" willed: "I am One, may I become many". This thought or vibration arose in that Consciousness and that thought-vibration or sound was OM ("the Word" of the Bible). Any sound without donations is The a at the mhish are in Consciousness is syllable OM by Yogis in Samadhi. Vishnu, Siva, Rama, etc., are functional or qualitative attributes of God, but OM is the true "name" of God.

When that vibration, the expression of cosmic energy, took place, creation-projection occurrel, neither exhausting nor even subtracting from Iw own fullness. So God has not become the world in all His totality. Rather He pervades the whole universe with some small part of His Being. Scientific assessment also proclaims this truth, for scientists aver that the heavenly bodies occupy an unimaginably small portion of this infinite space. The Gita says "I exist, supporting this whole universe by one part of Myself". The Bible states that after creating the universe in six days, God rested on the seventh. He rested in His own Infinitude.

This theory of creation is more picturesquely described in the Bhagavatam in the following words: "The macrocosm in the form of an egg lay on the causal waters. With the help of Time as well as of the destiny and innate disposition of the individual souls, however, at the end of ai thousand years, the Lord infused life into this egg. Bursting open that egg, issued therefrom the same Supreme Person with thousands of thighs, feet, arms and eyes and thousands of faces and heads, too."

The Indian has always regarded the macrocosm as the Brahma-anda (the Creator's egg). It is interesting how this philosophical theory finds its echo in modern science. Says Gamow: (Italics are mine).

"All the matter now within the reach of our largest telescope must at one time have been compressed into a single gigantic sphere about thirty times as large as the sun. At: this stage no elements existed-the primeval matter consisted of nothing but protons, electrons and neutrons indiscriminately mixed together. *(The word 'indiscriminate-ly' used here is scientific arrogance, untess it is taken to mean indistingushably; according to Vedanta the three modes of. Nature were in a state of equilibrium, and if they had been indiscriminately mixed together there would be disorder). This began to expand (How and why? we do not know, compare with the theory of Maya).* It became cooler and less dense. The neutrons, protons and electrons started to aggregate together and in this way the elements as we know them today were formed. The hot material continued to expand and its temperature fell from many millions of degrees to only a few thousand degrees. This gas was basically a cloud of hydrogen and helium, in which floated the more complex elements in the form of a fine dust. Later the mutual attraction exercised by gravitation acted to form vast condensation of matter which broke up into large individual clouds with empty space between. When it was hot, it shone with unimagniable brilli ance. *(This was Arjuna's view of the Cosmic Vision of Krishna as described in Chapter XI of the Gita),* and when it cool-ed, it was all dark. When the clouds broke away and condensed into stars, compression raised their temperature and there was light again."

This theory has history behind it! Says Mr. Z. Litynski in "Science Digest" (January 1962): "Professor Ryle of Cambridge, England, has spent the last few years studying the farthest galaxies. . .his patient studies reveal that several billion years ago the

distribution of galaxies in our universe was three times more dense than it is today. And, if several billion years ago the galaxies were three times closer together than they are now, simple arithmetie shows that in an even more distant past all the matter of the universe must have been concentrated in one giant star or one giant superatóm which, for some unknown reason exploded, sending the debris in all directions. The sensational character of Ryle's discovery stems from the fact that the theory of the origin of our universe in the explosion of a giant star or a giant superatom was postulated nearly 40 years ago by the then Belgian priest-mathematician Abbe Georges Lemaitre".

The theory of the expanding universe has been picturesquely described in Indian seriptures: During the churning of the ocean, the Lord took the form of a Tortoise to support the churning rod on His back. At one stage, He was tired and heaved a sigh. This set the ocean-waves rolling, in concentric circles-and they have not ceased till this day. Since the ocean referred to was the cosmic ocean, the waves might well signify the expanding universe.

theories of creation in indy am end the the Potential power latent in the Supreme Being manifests as the cosmos.

We saw how an impulse from God broke the mighty superatom, billions of years ago, and gave birth to the cosmos. That impulse was of the nature of a vibration; and, say the Upanishads, the vibration sound was "OM". Ether (or time-space continuum) was the first product of this vibration. The sound vibrating in ether caused the manifestation of the world. Even as life-giving elements in the air sustain living beings.

Movement in space gave birth to air. Hindu scriptures therefore say that air was born of ether. Air currents criss-crossing produced friction, and this friction generated heat-fire. Scientists tell us that when Oxygen and Hydrogen are combined, there is an explosion, fire and then water. Fire gives birth to water. Water eventually condenses into the earth. This is a simple picture of the creation of the elements given in our scriptures, though some of them give highly detailed and technical descriptions of this process.

In an article entitled "Wonders under Pressure" published in the Readers Digest, July, 1965, George Boehm says: " (Under the influence of high pressure) gases are compressed into liquids. Hot liquids freeze solid. Rocks behave like metals... In short, high pressure is a modern alchemy that creates a whole new catalogue of exotic materials.. The most intense pressure... can be produced for an instant in shock waves come produced for an instaimine). This supports the above theory of creation and evolution of the elements.

There may be different permutation and combinations. But basically there are the same elements throughout the universe. Hence it is the Universe and not Multiverse! Hector Mac-Pherson said, at a lecture at Oxford, as early as 1924:-

"Modern astronomy has demonstrated the oneness of the universe-The dark lines in the solar spectrum tell unmistakably of the existence in the solar atmosphere, in gaseous form, of the very elements, with which we are familiar here upon earth-These elements exist in different proportions and under varied conditions of temperature and pressure Matter, then, is subject to the' same laws in the most distant parts of the universe as here on earth. The new physics (astrophysica) does not speak of gravitation as a force, but as a property of space, but whatever gravitation may be on the ultimate analysis, it is cosmos-wide in its scope. What we look out on from our vantage-point on earth is a unified universe —one in law, one in substance, one in process."

What happens in the cosmos happens in each individual atom. As Sir Oliver Lodge pointed out in 1908, we get in an atom a sort of solar system, and it has been suggested that solar sys tems may be atoms of a still larger universe!

In the West, Anaxagoras was the first to sug. gest that the heavenly bodies were made of the same material as the earth. The source-books of Indian philosophy (the panishads) are unequivocal on this point.

That facilitates our analysis. By examining the microcosm we can know what the nature of the macrocosm is.

To borrow an expression from Dr. Macleod, the knowledge obtained by “looking up theough a telescope" is also obtained by "looking down through a microscope".

Science has arrived at something smaller than the molecule which is the atom, the treasure-chest of energy. Einstein proclaims that inert mass can be converted into energy by increasing its velocity. Great power is hidden in all matter. Matter in Indian philosophy is referred to as "Pradhana" or "Prakriti". The Hindu mystic therefore began to analyse himself and the matter that surrounded him in the firm conviction that whatever knowledge he arrived at that way would apply to the whole universe.

The atom consists of the electron, the proton and the neutron. These three hold within themselves enormous nuclear power, but as I have already pointed out this power never gets accidentally released because even though the atom is so minute, a mysterious intelligence force, not electric and outside and contrary to all the known laws of physics, binds together several protons of the same electric charge.

It is this mysterious intelligence which holas that power in check. These five, the electron, proton and neutron, the power within them and the intelligence controlling that power are the basic categories in Indian philosophy! The Intelligence in the atom is the Indwelling Presence, or God, which "pervades everything". The nuclear power in the atom is God's Nature or Cosmic Power of Shakti or Maya.

The concept of creation as "Nature" (Prakriti) is rather amusing. That is perhaps the only way in which it is possible to reconcile the Omnipresence of Infinite Being or God and the manifestation of material creation. For there cannot obviously be creation outside God if God is omnipresent and infinite. Hence, it is said that this cosmos is God's Nature. This Nature is eternally present in God, as potential nature or manifest nature. It is not apart from God, but is God's own Nature, even as your nature is an inextricable part of you.

Here again the individual, analysing his own state of being, the microcosm, is able to conceive the macrocosm.

Lord Krishna speaks in the Gita of Para Prakriti and Apara Prakriti-superior nature and inferior nature. Assuming that the whole of creation or the universe to be the Body of God, then we equate the diversity with the diversity we experience in our own body, without losing sight of the integral unity of our being. We have the different organs endowed with different faculties. Some of them are even nearly inert, e.g., the hair and the nails. Others are extremely sensitive. We have the subtle life-force and the still more subtle mind. The macrocosmic counterparts of these are termed Inferior Nature (of God) by Sri Krishna, being the five elements, mind, intellect and ego-sense. All these are molecular or atomie in nature.

What is superior nature then? Even a child today knows that the atom contains great power, and if, as in the case of Uranium, the nucleus is split, tremendous energy is released by chain reaction. However, this is possible only by bombarding the atom with a neutron and "splitting the nucleus". A scientist confesses:—

"Although so much is known about the behaviour of nuclei, the theory of the nucleus leaves much to be desired. What holds the neutrons and protons together? Why are some nuclei more stable than others? It is certain that the forces between neutrons and protons in a nucleus are unlike the electrical attractions between the nucleus as a whole and its surrounding electrons".

There is great power within the atom, and this great power is held in restraint by a superior power! That is what Sri Krishna refers to as

"superior nature" which, He says, "holds the worlds together". But for that restraining force, the protons with positive electric charge might fly around bringing about atomic disintegration or disaster every minute.

It is only possible to say that this superior nature is mighty intelligence an intelligence or-wisdom that is greater than the greatest power on earth. It is the soul of life. We call it Jiva.

How wonderful is this intelligence! During the conversion of food into usable energy, glucose has to be broken up. The superhuman intelligence that controls this

process is well described in a brilliant essay "LIFE" Magazine (Volume 34, No. 8) on the Human Body:-

"Scientists used to wonder why the cell bothers with all these complicated steps. Glucose is a pretty simple molecule, and the cell theoretically could break it up with one enzymatic whack and turn out ATP all at once. Now they know that such a quick turnover would be far too violent. In a laboratory experiment, hydrogen and oxygen can be combined to produce energy and form water—but only with explosive force. In the cell, the intricate step-by-step process makes ATP energy and water without such explosions innumerable times every day."

These two, then, are fundamental factors in creation - Intelligence (Consciousness) and Power (Life). The latter is but the efficient aspect of the former. Yet, philosophers treat Power, Nature or Maya, as though it were independent.

In a previous chapter we have seen that this power potential consists of three strands, and if we equate them to the constituents of the atom we have:—

Satva — neutron (neutral electric charge).
Rajas - proton (positive charge).
Tamas - electron (negative charge).

Creation is a play of these Qualities of Nature (Satva, Rajas and Tamas), with the Indwelling Spirit (Chit-Shakti). Thus have all beings an inner core of consciousness endowed with Power and clothed with Nature composed of these three Qualities, in their gross and subtle forms-the soul and the various organs of knowledge and action, the life-force and the inner instrument or the mind.

Vedanta has an extremely interesting, through rather complicated, explanation of this process; but it is enough for our purposes here to understand that when the equilibrium of the power potential is disturbed, it begins to manifest itself, revealing all its characteristies in various degrees, which we call creation.

Exactly why all this took place, no one will ever know-neither philosopher nor scientist– and it is useless enquiry. Even scientific speculations only describe the

present cosmos and how it evolved, never "why". If you ask the scientist: "The gigantic sphere burst several billion years ago. How long was it in the state of single superatom? From beginningless time? When did Time start?"-no one can answer these questions. Hence the scriptures say that the soul and its potentialities (manifestation) are beginningless.

When Lord Buddha was questioned about God and the world, he remained silent and advised the enquirer: "When your house is on fire, will you be interested to know how it got there? No, you will put it out first. Even so, you know you are unhappy in your present state. Shake it off by attaining Nirvana".

There is another scientific theory about the birth of our earth and planets which, again, is corroborated in Indian mythology. Fred Hoyle says:—

"Our Sun once belonged to a binary system —two stars rotating round each other. The original companion of the Sun was the type cf star known as a supernova which is liable to explode when it has reached a certain stage of development".

This, according to Hoyle, was what did occur. The supernova exploded, blowing out a great mass of incandescent gas which the Sun held on. to by force of gravity. Hoyle says: "The companion star's final gift to the Sun was a cloud of gas with just the right kind of composition necessary to account for the constitution of the earth and the planets".

We have a myth connected with Lord Siva and Parvathi dancing together-two stars dancing around each other. At one stage, Siva looks at Parvathi. Nature begins to manifest itself, creation begins. Consciousness (Chit) wills and Power (Shakti) which is thought of as female, manifests as the cosmos.

The process of the One becoming many has been clearly described in Indian Philosophy or Vedanta. When, in that One Infinite Being, the vibration or OM-sound arose, it underwent a process of metamorphosis. What was hidden in It began to manifest itself. As in the human being, the will was first translated into thought. The thought later condensed into form. Let us compare That Being to the clear sky. The water-vapour is hidden in it. A little change in the atmosphere brings out this hidden

water vapour, and we perceive white clouds. This corresponds to the first stage of Creation, where God is known as Iswara. The change proceeds further and the white cloud condenses still further into black rain-bearing cloud. This corresponds to the second stage of Creation-the Cosmic Mind or Hiranyagarbha-which is Cosmic Life.

The form of the universe has been conceived (garbha) and it only remains to give birth to it. The rain-drops have begun to form, and it only: remains for them to fall. The falling rain is comparable to the third stage of creation, where the same God is known as the Virat. The one eloud rains, and the rain falls as distinct drops, entirely separate from one another.

The one—which was at first unmanifest, invisible, and transcendental has become manifest, visible and immanent. This process is inevitably linked to darkness; even as darkness falls on earth before heavy rain. In that darkness of ignorance, the infinite beings which have manifested in that Infinite Being assume independence!

Rainfall, in Bhagavatham (X.40/14) is referred to as "the Lord's semen". The Upanishads declare that the soul descends into this world first through rain, then transmogrifies as plant, which is eaten by man, and so becomes the seed which is transferred to woman. This imagery seems to indicate that the soul is actually embodied long before we realise, and: funnily enough, passes through the plant and animal stage every time!

Let us now turn to the Bibblical story of creation. God created Adam in His own image. There is no basic difference between Man and God. The image of the Spirit of God (Isvara) in the mirror of his Cosmic Mind-stuff (Hiran-yagarbha), but limited to individuality-is Man.

There is not even a phonetic difference between Adam. and Atma (and, perhaps, even Atom) - is there? That Atma is like the potential raindrops in the black cloud, which have not yet. fallen on the ground. Let us not forget that each drop in the ocean or in a cloud, shares the characteristics of the ocean or the cloud.

This Adam or Atma is God, in Reality. But God had willed Himself into many ness. His "play" was a desire to live. Living God in man is called Jeeva (also spelt Jiva).

Eve is also pronounced Eva and between Eva and Jeeva there is no essential phonetic difference. Jeeva or Eva is Atma or Adam plus the will to live. The two are not distinet entities. In Hinduism, always pictorially vivid, they are symbolised as the hermaphroditic Ardhanareeswara. The Bible, to emphasise their identity states that Eve was fashioned out of Adam's rib.

And what of the Biblical paradise? When Adam and Eve are still beyond and untouched by Kala (Time and Death) they exist in the paradise of Cosmic Consciousness. When they fall they become individuals with human consciousness. Kala (the serpent Time and Death), tempted them with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but the very acquisition of knowledge (the eating of the fruit) implies the state of ignorance, so it was no longer possible, having eaten the fruit, for them to stay in the Garden of Eden, which is Cosmic Consciousness, itself beyond the duality of knowledge and ignorance..

The conscious eating of the fruit of knowledge immediately involved the Jeeva in the illusion of duality, so that the false super-imposition if the unreal upon the Real commenced. The unreal, now appearing as the Real, body and mind are mistaken for immortal Atma. The Devil, in the shape of the Serpent Time-Death, falsely suggests that "you will not die", whereas body and mind , caught in the Time-Space continuum, must perish. So Jiva, confused by the fog of duality in the maze of dark ignorance, stumbles into the wheel of birth and death, action and reaction.

Reaction, according to the Karma theory, is almost always meant to restore balance, penduluming the Jiva back to the position where he can seize the Realisation of the Atma. Weighted against this swing is binding and blinding ignorance, so that the Jiva reacts afresh to the reactions of past action and finds no release until, the flesh of Jivatma being crucified, the blood of ignorance is drained, and Atma is resurrected. Christ's life was a symbol of this process.

The biggest paradox in all this is the Immortal Soul (Adam) wishing to live (Jiva), so that tempted by Time, the immortal becomes mortal through a wish being created from its very Self. Thus the Self, the Spark of God, which was not subject to the time process now comes within it, cursed to undergo transmigration, birth and death. The forbidden fruit is the knowledge of the relative world and of course relative

knowledge involves knowing the pairs of opposites, pleasure and pain, good and evil.

Even the statement that after eating the forbidden fruit Eye realised she was naked and donned a fig leaf has a meaning. If Adam and Eve were alone, why should Eve feel ashamed? Once Cosmic Consciousness is lost and Jiva falls into the trap of Time, Jiva veils itself by ignorance.

This drama is enacted not at just one place, but throughout the universe, in each atom, so to say. That is how we can solve the riddle of Cain going away and finding a wife for himself. Where did she come from? Just as one Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel, some other Adam and Eve should have given birth to Cain's wife. Creation on the cosmic scale.

About the evolution of life itself several theories have been advanced. The Upanishads concur with the Biblical story of a complete primary creation. The Puranas give us a picture of continuous evoultion-from the fish to the perfect Man. There is a Jehovah's Witness pamphlet which discounts the theory of evolution on the ground that God created the universe in six days, and that therefore there could have been no evolution!

We labour under a false notion that there is: a contradiction when we talk of creation and, evolution. Quite likely the Biblical six days: streched over millions of terrestrial years. from the fish. The scriptures say that God: created man too, in the very beginning. We admit that. Man can rise or fall as he battles to transcend Karma, but all other creatures must also evolve to become one with God. From the mineral to the most highly developed creature of creation (man) all must progress to realise God.

Here is the Hindu theory. In the Puranas we have a description of the incarnations of God. The first few of them were animal. We stick human heads on animal forms! This series traces the evolution of life on earth. The first Avatara was a "dolphin". The unicellular organism swam in water-till it reached the stage of the dolphin. Then we have the tortoise, which is amphibian and a little higher than fish in evolution. Thirdly, the boar (some think. it is a rhinocerous). God dwells in all, and although

the boar is regarded by civilised man as being very low, atleast here in evolution it has come on to solid earth.

Next is the Narasimha, a half-man and half-lion. The animal has grown to the human level, yet the discriminative faculty has not been fully developed. This stage shares both the kingdoms, but the animal rules the human-hence the lion head. (If we contemplate this, we shall begin to feel that the vast majority of humans are still at this stage!)

Fifthly, there is the dwarf. The dwarf begs. If you hold out your hand to beg, you shrink in size. A begger does not rise to the full stature of man and is not fully evolved.

The sixth is Parasurama who is the impulsive human being who is full of temper and ready to kill, acting against his Brahmanie nature. A Brahman by birth, he was prepared to kill his own mother, when his father asked him to do so. However, when his father asked him what he wanted as a reward, he replied that he wanted his mother whom he had slain!

We then have Rama who was bound by a very strict code of morality. He was an example of righteousness in all aspects.

The story of Rama is given in elaborate detail in the Indian epic called Ramayana which most scholars accept as historical.

Balarama and Krishna, a joint incarnation, child, loet in a aspects sholay, stateman child, lover, etc. Krishna's story
which is froar ed a books, and historibharata (Srimad) Bhagavatham which is considered a legend or Purana.

The only difference between this process of evolution and Darwin's theory is that whereas Darwin says my grandfather was an ape, we say I was an ape, in a previous birth. We were not born of apes, but we ourselves were apes.

Even this is not a serious difference. There is in South Indian homes a traditional belief that the dead grand- or greatgrandfather takes birth in the same family, le., the same soul returns to the family. Therefore, if the grandfather was an ape, it was I who was the grandfather –the two statements refer to the same individual!

Enough of all this speculation about creation and evolution. Let us look at the universe we live in and our own Self!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PHILOSOPHER'S TOOLS

The wise who have realised the Truth will instruct thee in that knowledge.

GITA.

The Yoga Vasishtha gives an astounding description of the Universe. Here is revealed the significant truth that perhaps in the very room in which we may be sitting, mysterious subtle planes of being exist, wonderful in form as our solar system. Our senses function on a very small range of the whole gamut of awareness, so that we are not even aware of all that is going on even in the little room in which we are. The Indian philosopher has indeed built up both a deep-rooted and towering edifice of concept, so complicated and so many-facetted that we may well ask with which brick he began! Though his mind can project itself to "the very verge of infinity" he perceives the futility of searching limitless outer space and turns its beam upon that microcosm which lies so close at hand, himself in the form of his own physical being and its immediate surroundings. Analyse that, he thinks, and you analyse the universe.

He has a few simple rules to govern his research work. He has six criteria for proving what is real, of which four are important:—

(a) Direct Perception (Prakyaksha) is empirical experience or sense-experience, whatever we see before us. We perceive this universe. It is absurd to say, "Nothing exists". What does that mean? What did you see which made you say that nothing existed? Nagarjuna (one of the greatest philosophers) twisted Buddha's teachings and convincingly proved that nothing exists! Philososophers can make us doubt our own existence by their logie! Well, we do not subscribe to the theory that nothing exists. Since all these things which constitute the world are apprehended by the senses, even if their appearance is unreal, there must be a substratum, real and undeniable, for this empirical universe.

(b) Inference (Anumana). Take the oft-quoted illustration:
"Where there is smoke, there is fire". This world, this universe, of tremendous and delicate proportion and balance, exists; we can see it. It unthinkable, knowing even the little we do of it, that no intelligent power governs it. I see rain, sun-shine, and wind. Nature seems to work automatically; heat and rain follow each other as though there is a switch somewhere "governed" automatically-even as there is an automatic switch in the refrigerator which keeps the temperature within it neither too cold nor warm, and which connects the refrigerator to the electric mains the moment the desired cooling has been reached. It seems to have intelligence of its own, but remember that this governing switch has YOUR (the inventor's or the manufacturer's) intelligence behind it! When the robot changes from red to green automatically, it seems a wonder; but YOU invented it and you have timed its switch.

Similarly there must be a mighty intelligence behind these phenomena governing the universe, creating and maintaining conditions suitable for the purpose. He has in view. Even as the inert refrigerator (working with such breath-taking intelligence!) does not possess that intelligence, the forces of nature do not possess the intelligence that they manifest in their functioning, but are themselves governed by some mighty intelligence, the Supreme Coordinator. Who is that? Who, by ordaining the forces of gravity and electro-magnetism, keeps the heavenly bodies in their orbits? This can be no other than the work of Intelligent Power. Though apparently it is the work of the muscles concerned actuated by the brain when I raise my hand, who actuates the brain? By the great wonders and the small I must infer the existence of God-Intelligence in Nature, and God-Soul-Intelligence in man. Applied to the state of deep sleep we formulate the statement thus: "I slept-waking, I felt happy, feeling the

happiness was drawn from that state of deep sleep. So I infer that I was happy during sleep".

(e) Simile (Upamana). One phenomenon is used to explain another. If there is only one Supreme Consciousness, how is it possible for me to see another? Even if, as is hinted in our scriptures, it is possible for me to see all phenomena as a homogeneous unit, how can I assert that I am one with all, or that One alone exists?
Is there not at least a duality-I and the all? Even in Samadhi, what is it that experiences the Bliss of the intuitive realisation point to absolute Unity or Oneness or non-duality (Adwaita). How can we solve this riddle? Take a simile or illustration. I am dreaming. I am there and all my friends too, and I am enjoying a party-that was the dream. Where was all this?-In me. I created it. My own mind created this inner world and I myself am in it, watching it. Was that possible? Yes. In dream, I (one person) perceive myself and so many others created by my own mind as distinct and consciousness and we perceive that world as though we are now different from it. We (the subtle and physical aspects) are also the creation of that one common consciousness. One alone exists and in that many appear! In the dream, I am mauled by a tiger and suffer pain. The tiger and the pain too are my own creation; and I seem to experience it-and the duality too is the creation of ignorance. In the same way, in Samadhi there seems to be a duality of experience (of Bliss) and experiencer (I)-though both are within the One Self. Again, we are told that the Self is unborn-and yet, there is birth, growth and death here in this world which is subject to creation, preservation and dissolution. The sage gives an example. The reflection of the sun in water shakes, though the sun is stable, on account of the fact that the medium through which it is reflected is disturbed. The Self is unborn, eternal. But on account of the wind of ignorance, when the medium (Antahkarana or the intellect) through which it is reflected is disturbed, the Self appears to come and go.

This Anyonya-Adhyasa (mutual superimposition) can also be illustrated by the common phenomenon: to a person travelling in a railway train, the objects outside seem to be moving (this can be quite confusing in a railway station, where often even grown-ups are not sure whether their train or the train on the next line is moving!) while the moving train seems to be stationary the attributes of movement and stationa-riness are exchanged.

The "disturbance" (movement, birth, death, etc.) do not belong to the world or the Self, but, to the mind. Again, we noticed that the ultimate Reality is Chit-Shakti (Conscionsness-Power) and that the Power has three Qualities, Satva, Rajas and Tamas. How can we believe that the unimaginable diversity is the result of these factors? Take, for instance, the case of a man standing in the centre of a room with three big mirrors around him. He is one and the mirrors are three. But look, there are thousands of persons and mirrors in the mirrors!

Man is made in the image of God; this image is multiplied ad infinitum in the mirror of His Power or deluding potency called Maya.

Again, we are told that objects perceived with the help of the senses are false because our senses are limited and perverted, but that there is the Reality behind this appearance. How? Take two examples. The mirage. We know that there is no water in the desert and yet even the person who knows that mirage may exist in the desert experiences the feeling that there is water there. Even after discovering the truth, the illusory perception persists. Senses can deceive us.

In the same way, the appearance of the blue sky is a perversion of the sense of sight. Where we should see nothing, we see blueness and a dome! It is an optical illusion. But the Reality behind these appearances is true; in the case of the mirage, the reality is the substratum, which is the rays of the sun, and in the case of the sky, the reality is the substratum of space. So space and the rays of the sun are the reality.

Thus great philosophical truths, when naked, easily slip through the grasp of our mind, but can be more easily caught and held if clothed. Hang on to the clothes and you feel the shape of the body underneath.

Yet all these three proofs are like double-edged swords and may be used by men of perverted intelligence to disprove the existence of God or the Reality! Hence, the fourth important proof is said to be:

(d) The testimony of sages who have had direct experience (Aptavakya). There have always been philosophers, sages, logis, Kishs, Maharishis, who have experienced the Reality. For them the Reality is more real than you are to me. They affirm that

nothing else is real! They assure us that it is possible for us, too, to realise this. Swimming cannot be explained or proved in the drawing room — and yet, the swimmer assures us that our solid physical body can move on top of liquid water! He knows and we should accept his word as truth, and, if we wish to swim, we should do as he tells us to do and learn the art! The same it is with Reality. If we accept the words of the sages and follow them, we are sure to arrive at the experience ourselves. Aldous Huxley, that world-renowned philosopher, says:

"The self-validating certainty of direct awareness cannot in the very nature of things be achieved except by those equipped with the moral astrolabe of God's mysteries." But a wit is a fact, confirmed and re-confirmed during two or three thousand years of religious history, that the ultimate Reality is not clearly and immediately apprehended, except by those who have made themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit." Hence, Huxley recommends:

"If one is not oneself a sage or saint, the best thing one can do, in the field of metaphysics, is to study the works of those who were, and who, because they had modified their merely human mode of being, were capable of a more than merely human kind and amount of knowledge."

This is Aptavakya, the irrefutable direct experience. All the other proofs must be guardedly applied not to contradict this.

Iu philosophy, Reality has a special meaning. It is not correct to say "This is a shawl". As has already been pointed out, Reality should be uncontradicted by any other state or experience. You call it a shawl but it is also a bundle of yarn. You can call it also a piece of material made of thread — and in a stricter analysis, it is basic material in the form of cotton.

What is such an ultimate principle in this universe? What is such an ultimate principle in me? Who am I? Perhaps I am the body or perhaps I am a living body. What is the difference? Sometimes we see a dead body and there the "I" is gone — there is nobody to say "I am the body". Ah, then, perhaps I am a person and I have a body of which I am independent. I can think, I can see, hear, ete., but the "T" is the

very thinker of thought, not limited by it in any way. The things perceived are only an appearance, limited by the limitations of the senses and the mind.

Pratyaksha or empirical knowledge cannot reveal the Ultimate Reality. The intellect itself is incapable of realising the illimitable because it is conditioned. Anumana (inference) and Upamana (simile) point to a Reality unconditioned and untainted by limitations. We, therefore, take refuge in the utterances of the sages-- Aptavakya or scriptural declaration. Our conclusions should not go against them. Their authors have had direct perception of the Reality.

I feel that in this category we can even include the findings of the pure scientists. They, too, have sought the Reality in their own way and their testimony, too, should be accepted (though not absolutely and efforts should be made to correlate and synthesise it with the testimony of the scriptures — a synthesis of physics and metaphysics
.
The two other proofs are of a rather academic character:—
(e) Anupalabdhi: Trying to establish a fact from the impossibility of perceiving the non-perception of it". In other words, though we can logically disprove the existence of this physican word, something i which thist be the substratum of all this. I can't visualise that "nothing exists"!

(f) Arthapatti: "An inference by which the quality of one object is attributed to another because of their sharing some other quality in common". This is used in comparisons between Jiva and Brahman; both are of the essential nature of Satchidananda, because they share the same characteristics — one arrives at the conclusion that what is in the microcosm must be in the macrocosm too.

CHAPTER XIX

KNOW THY SELF

This Self is Brahman, the Absolute.

MANDUKYA UPANISHAD.

The external world ultimately depends upon the Perceiver. "The beauty" (or even more explicitly the Reality) of the object "is in the eye of the beholder".

Who or what am I? That is the next fundamental question in philosophy more profound than the one concerning the world outside. I may be able to defy and ignore the world, but I simply cannot ignore myself. I exist. I existed and in all probability I will continue to exist. In the child-body, in the youthful body, in the height of maturity and in the senile decaying physical frame — I exist. During the waking state, the dream state and in seep seen eit different from the "experiencer" of another state, yet the continuity of consciousness proves the identity of these two and all others.

In the waking state, I am the experiencer of a world outside myself. In the dream state, however, I experience a world within myself. The dreamer seems to be somebody different from the person in the waking state. The laws that govern their functions each seem to be different! In the deep sleep state, I wipe out even this inner world, forgetting everything, and enjoy peaceful and blissful sleep. I am, but I do not know that I am during the period of sleep. This experience contradicts the experiences of both the waking and dream states. In the latter two there is consciousness of diversity and plurality, but in the deep sleep state there is homogeneity.

Again in deep sleep there is total absence of all knowledge. Even the awareness of having slept soundly and enjoyed peace and happiness is carried over to and revealed only subsequently in the waking state. This aspect of deep sleep is contradicted by the other states, where there is awareness. Hence, none of these three can be accepted as the Reality, for, in philosophy that alone is accepted as Reality which is continuously real and is thus uncontradicted.

Reality is somewhere between these three - if we have a state of consciousness where there is homogeneity and there is awareness too, that will be Reality. This experience is had in the fourth state, Turiya or Samadhi, in which the "I" exists as a

homogeneous being without being subject to the diversified experience, but without ignorance either. That is the Reality and is the common factor of all the other three states. Turiya or the transcendental state is a state which transcends but includes all these three states and is the fourth state of consciousness. The "I" shines in its own light, in the supreme awareness of "I am that I am"

I exist as a homogeneous being in a state where there is no diversity. It is existence absolute. This cannot be contradicted by anything or anybody or any school of philosophy at any time. Existence is the Ultimate Reality. Here the Indian philosopher is invincible. Nobody can say, "Prove to me that the Reality (God) exists" because the Indian philosopher will ask "Do you exist? Find out who it is that says 'I exits?. That existence is Reality — God". Let us listen to this dialogue between the student and the philosopher:

Q. What is God?
A. Who is asking this question?
Q. It is I.
A. No, it is "you"!
Q. So - what?
A. "I" for you. "You" for me. In other words I and you are the same. Even so, to a third person, you are "he". There-
fore, I = You = He. That which is able to feel this unity and say I, I, I, everywhere, in all beings– that is God, Reality, Existence Absolute.

This Existence Absolute, in other words, is not the existence (of diversity denoted by the three persons, I, you and he) that we experience, but homogeneous experience.

Secondly, I know that I exist. “I think; therefore I am" ', and "I am; therefore I think"— are two views of the same panorama. The word "therefore" which implies a cause-and-effect relationship is unfortunate. Knowledge and existence are two sides of the same coin.

In the waking state, this knowledge is associated with the physical world; in the dream-state, with the subtle, inner, mental world; and in the deep sleep state, paradoxically, this knowledge is associated with ignorance, so that there is no

immediate knowledge (even if there is, it is veiled by ignorance) but it is expressed in the subsequent waking state, as "I slept peacefully". In the transcendental state or Samadhi, this awareness exists as itself, independent of subject-object (knower-known) relationship. Knowledge (which is the common factor in all these four states) Absolute is my essential nature — not the knowledge of the diversity here in the waking state, not the knowledge of the dream world which is contradicted by the deep sleep state, but Knowledge Absolute - immediate intuitional knowledge of "I am", independent of the false identification with objects.

Here again we have homogeneity or oneness as the basic common factor, even as in the case of Existence Absolute. Even this Existence and Knowledge are not two independent categories, but it is Existence - Knowledge Absolute - Existence which is awareness, or Knowledge of Self-existence.

Thirdly, during the deep sleep state we derive great peace and happiness (or at least, know no pain at all because there is no diversity or duality. Where there is homogeneity, there is also Bliss. Hence, in the "Fourth" state of Existence-Knowledge Absolute or Unity, there is Bliss — not as an objective experience which would then involve duality, but as Knowledge of ever-existent Bliss itself!

Hence, who am I? "Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute — Sat-chit-ananda". That is the nature of the Self, the substratum for the "I", realisable when the individual "I" merges in the Cosmic "I" which is the common substratum for I, you and he.

The sages of India are emphatic that this is the psychological basis for the urges, ambitions, and desires that power man's thoughts, words and deeds. Ignorance transfers these three attributes of the Self to the not-Self, viz., body and mind; and man seeks to experience and express them in the body and mind, in the shape of physical health (it should ever exist!), & thirst and a curiosity for knowledge, and a desire to be ever happy. This quest has a right basis but a wrong approach. It is pursued by the wrong person (body, mind and ego) in wrong quarters (the finite, changing world of objects) and hence proves unfruitful. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute is the Self itself, and can be had only in It.

The Upanishads are loud and insistent on the glory of the realisation of this Absolute. In fact, that is pointed out as the true goal of life, and the Upanishads are emphatic that we cannoti achieve real and lasting happiness which we constantly seek here, unless and until we reach that goal. During the waking state, our consciousness is centred around what can be percived by our senses, whose powers are very limited. We have five senses of knowledge, with the mind as the sixth, that mind being their common and unifying base. During the waking state our knowledge is provided by them and is limited to the gross physical world– range of their activity ever here being extremely
narrow.

During the dream state even though this limitation does not operate externally, still it is there and it operates in a subtle sphere internally. During deep sleep there is the over-all Imitation of ignorance. In all these three states, because of these limitations, there is an absence of direct experience of bliss which is our essential nature and which is not far from us. The Upanishad declares:

"The unconditioned Infinite (Bhuma) alone is Bliss; there is no happiness at all in the conditioned state or existence."

We can never experience supreme undiluted happiness except in a state where there is no limitation. We should break down all barriers of limitation and then realise the Self, as homogeneous, all-pervading, one Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Until then we are in a dreamland or a fool's paradise.

The Upanishads point out that I, you and he in other words, the world) are all One; we are One homogeneous Being. This realisation liberates us from all evils at once.

This then is the essential basis of Indian philosophy. All schools agree that God or the Supreme Being exists and that It is the substratum for "I" and the "world". "I" is the subjective irreducible and Prakriti or Nature is the objective irreducible. Subject and object themselves being the two ends of one stick!

God is the Cosmic Consciousness- Existence- Consciousness- Bliss Absolute.

As to the purpose of creation, it is generally agreed that the world has been willed by God so that each individual may strive to get back to the realisation of that Reality. As we have seen, the nature of the Ultimate Reality is Satchitananda. Of course, this is a provisional definition of the Reality which is undefinable (as Eckhart says: "Why doest thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.").

Existence-Knowledge-Bliss is the nearest possible definition. "I know that I am Bliss". How blissful am I? I can lick my hand, but I can't lick my tongue. We cannot taste our own tongue. We are told by people who revel in and reveal the Truth through mythology that when the Supreme Being wanted to taste Its own Bliss it willed this universe and tasted the bliss of Its own essential nature. To illustrate this, they have painted the picture of Baby Narayana lying in a leaf sucking His own big toe!

That is the meaning and purpose of creation. That is why we are constantly running after pleasure and happiness. The goal of life is to get back to that realisation or direct experience of the Supreme Bliss. All schools of philosophy are agreed upon this.

It is the work of religion to supplement philosophy by showing a path to recapture that supreme unalloyed Bliss.

keligion, broadly speaking, should be a practical technique to realise the tenets of philosophy.

CHAPTER XX

SALVATION UNLIMITED

Even if the most sinful worships Me, . . . soon he becomes righteous and attains to eternal peace.

GITA

There are two glories of Indian philosophie-thought, the one arising from the other. We have faith in the Omnipresence of God, nothing exists either in Reality or Illusion (Maya) that. is not God. There is nothing else but God. From this massive foundation-altar of belief springs. the purest fimae of compassion. Whatever is a creature, (a creation), however simple its form, stone, mineral, dust itseli, the unicellular organism, no less than the intricate being of Man, must ultimately realise the Truth, evolving into-Godhead. In all things there are planes of consciousness waiting to be unveiled, Self-Consciousness, latent cosmic consciousness, latent. divinity. Even the naked aborignial worshipping his stone is on the true path. Even the worm crushed under your unwitting foot will one day be an illumined sage. Such is the vastness of God's compassion.

Eternal damnation seems to have been invented as the big stick of fear to beat up converts. Indian philosophy has never even glanced at it.

We speak of the Asuras, those demoniacal beings who are the opposite of the Devas, the divine beings. Though we visualise them as the dwellers in hell or the regions of darkness, even they should one day find God. Though there will always be the three groups, human beings on earth, celestials in heaven and demoniacals in hell, individuals in all three groups are continuously evolving into states on the ladder of consciousness which will ultimately help them climb to Godhead. A soul of extraordinary merit may, as a Deva, dwell for a long period in heaven, and an extraordinary vicious soul may suffer long ages in hell, but ultimately all have to be redeemed.

Deva means "a being of light" and comes from the Sanskrit root Div which means "to illumine" — the word "day" also springs from the same root, as also the word "divine".

Devas are gods who dwell in heaven — we call them immortals. But that immortality is paradoxically temporary immortality. This immortality is conferred upon the foremost among them for the period of the existence of this solar system (which is not very long!) and when it is resolved back into its source, these so-called immortals are dismissed. In the Gita we are told that they re-enter the mortal world. In the same

way as a jailer has a longer term of life in prison than the prisoner, the gods who preside over our destinies have a longer life-expectation. Even so, beings whom we regard as Asuras, dwellers of the nether world or hell, are not damned forever. If a soul has been dark that it is not fit to be even a plant on this earth, it will dwell in the nether regions for a considerable period, but never longer than the life of the solar system, and, when the latter is dissolved, it will enter the reconstituted mortal world, to strive for God-realisation.

We shall not forget for a moment that every soul is essentially divine and all evil is but a shadow. In creation, all are His children, and, however diabolical one is, God cannot banish him—for He is the ruler of the whole cosmos in a sense, and the Sole Reality underlying all phenomena, so even the evil soul (of course, the Soul is never evil!) is part of Himself.

There is really no alternative to redemption, and even hell is but a reformatory school to which He sends the weaker of His beloved children to learn some important lessons.

That every soul has to achieve Self-realisation gives meaning to all our endeavours. The practice of Yoga involves self-discipline, which is irksome to the pleasure-loving mind. It there were no compensatory promise of Supreme Bliss, no one would be willing to undertake this irksome job. We are assured of Supreme
Bliss or Liberation, and warned that we must reach the goal at some time or other-whether in this birth or in a later one. No shirking will help us, for delay only lengthens the process. So it might as well be now! Inevitability of Self-realisation gives meaning to life and spurs us on to greater spiritual endeavour.

Bliss is for all. No Hindu scripture ever imposes any restriction. Even when here and there in the Puranas or the utterances of Great Ones, one comes across expressions glorifying birth in India, or as a Brahman, etc., (which may make it appear that such are the chosen people!) they are to be interpreted as "Arthavada", a special literary device whereby while addressing the people of a particular community or school of thought, the teacher glorifies that community or school and exalts it above all others, in order to add fire to their zeal. There are no restrictions on the basis of caste. group,

etc. Heaven has no gates nor has hell. Self-realisation or the Kingdom of God does not even have walls or barricades.

No one can turn us away from the gate of heaven, for there is neither a gate nor walls to narrow the entrance nor even a gatekeeper to scrutinise us. The will to persevere is our only passport.

Who is eligible to realise God? You! The Bhagavad Gita startles some with its pronouncement that if he resolves aright the greatest sinner can instantly transform himself into a saint. The life of sage Valmiki was a manifestation of this truth.

Some think that this instant transformation is ridiculous. How can the mere repetition of a Name, Mantra or formula, wash away our sins? How can a pious resolve, resolutely kept wipe out past karma? How can a confession of faith in the redeeming power of God (as formulated in faith in Jesus having bled on the cross for the sins of humanity) save my soul? Absurd tricks! Fantasies! Perhaps they are tricks, but only by such "tricks" can we get near expressing the inexpressible.

The Great Ones believe that the world and its products, sin, karma, etc., are all unreal, "tricks", the product of psychological perversion. All that is necessary to counteract them is another equally mythical weapon, another strong belief. a faith, a psychological affirmation. No gun is needed to drive a shadow away. Only bring the light in. Faith in God is that light, the dispeller of shadows. So it is that a sinner, as the light falls upon him, becomes a saint.

It must be remembered that even in the broad human plane there are different grades of evolution. Some Indian myths bring even animals close to God, but it is generally agreed that only Man is capable of realising Him.

Bach human being has a field of human consciousness and at one point in that field he is closest to God. Religious leaders make a grave terror in ignoring this and in failing to find out at which point each individual is closest to God. The most vital job of a religious leader is to find that point and help each individual to find it too within himself. With such wise guidance even the most primitive man will instantly realise Him.

To proclaim that "ours is the only path" and demand that all others queue up behind us leads only to disturbance and "confusion worse confounded".

Think of it geometrically. God is the centre within everyone. The shortest path to the Centre is the radius, that straight line unique to every individual who stands upon that endless, changeless, complete and perfect circle, the Circumference. His straight line is no other's, for only he can occupy the infinitely small portion of Infinity which is the Circumference.

"Come! Travel to the centre on my radius!"— This is proselytisation which is the product of ignorance, even if it is sincere. But it is often much worse, the expression of vested interests, political intrigue, or plain commercial exploitation.

CHAPTER XXI

DEATH AND REBIRTH

Just as a man casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied self casts off worn out bodies and enters which are new.

GITA

Reincarnation is necessitated by immortality ... analogy teaches it ... . science upholds it... nature of the soul needs it ... many strange sensations support it, and. . . it alone gradually solves the problems of life.

"Re-incarnation" by E. D. WALKER

Yet another special feature of Indian philosophy is its faith in the evolution of the individual soul. The soul caught in the meshes of ignorance has to evolve into something better until it arrives at the stage of perfection, where it realises its identity

with God or becomes one with Him, in the popular expression. "Devo Bhutva Devam Aradhayet" - "One must become a God to worship God!" unless we share His own nature, we cannot merge in Him.

Something was asleep in the mineral, awoke in the plant, lived in the animal, became conscious of the self in the human and must then furtther evolve in self-knowledge to cosmic consciousness. We little humans, full of imperfections, have got to raise ourselves to the stage where we can fulfil Jesus Christ's commandment - "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect".

Perhaps in this lifetime we may only be able to remove a small fraction of one imperfection, but even that is a step forward.

If we have zeal to work for a greater goal than mere existence, even if we sueceed in removing only one small bit of imperfection, if we feel that we have even gained enough strength to reach up, let alone touch, the next rung of the ladder, then we are on the right course, our compass is set.

When Jesus said "You must become perfect", His words were not a command impossible of fulfillment. Only those who think. He referred to one little lifespan of under a century feel despair at the impossibility of that perfection: "It may take us fifty years to remove only one of our imperfections! We are: 'dead before we start on another!" Some say, self-surrender is one of the most difficult to achieve — it might take you many lives!

On the way to perfection the soul, during the course of its progressive births, is offered endless chances, infinite opportunities to strive towards its goal of cosmic consciousness.

We may return to the same planet or go to other planets and assume embodiments suited to their climate; but we still have many opportunities, many incarnations.

As far as Indian philosophy is concerned, reincarnation is a fact. The theory of evolution takes care only of material form-the theory of reincarnation goes one step

further and links the body with the immortal soul. The soul must ultimately achieve cosmic consciousness.

Even the popular notion of evolution of human society as a whole is not irreconcilable with individual evolution, but is in fact a collective view of an individual process. Whether you say (looking at a marching crowd), that, each one of those people is going forward, or you say that the whole crowd is going forward -- in effect, it is all the same. As the souls return to the earth, progressively more enligh-tened, they create a society more enlightened and evolved. In fact, collective human progress without an acceptance of the theory of individual evolution (on the basis of reincarnation) is difficult to accept; for, the characteristies that I inherit from my parents and acquire in society would fail to influence me if at the same time I do not have inherent receptivity to them! All these go hand in hand — and do not contradict or cancel one another.

We should not forget, however, that we are talking now from the relative point of view, accepting our existence in a state of ignorance and misery, not from the point of view of the Absolute. It is only the embodied soul that undergoes transmigration; it is only the soul in darkness that seeks light; it is only the soul which ignorantly identifies itself with imperfection that seeks to attain perfection.

Sri Krishna makes this clear in His teaching in the Gita! "Just as the embodied soul undergoes boyhood, youth and old age, in the body, even so he attains to another body." We have this clear statement of this great truth in Srimad Bhagavatham (IV. 20, 12): "Trans-migration takes place only of the subtle body— which is made of the five subtle elements, the senses and the deities presiding over the same and a reflection of the Spirit-and which is distinct from the Sprit."

I was surprised to read words attributed to an intellectual giant of the calibre of H. G. Wells, that the belief in reincarnation is childish. Disbelief in reincarnation is based on: gross ignorance of the truth about the several factors involved, the soul, the body and their connecting links. life and mind.

The soul is eternal and unborn; it is the uncreated unit in God. It cannot die, since it was not even born. The body is an assembled composition of the five elements which

were there before my birth and will continue to exist after my death when by decomposition the elements. of which the body was composed would be returned to their source.

It is really the connecting link that seems to come and go, to take birth and die. The mind is the soul's ignorance of its own Infinite nature; and it is this mind (which we call the personality, the mask of the soul) which links the soul successively to one body after another, until by various experiences and self-expressions it has perfected itself, shaken off its ignorance and realised that the egoity that it had engendered was no egoity at all but truly the Infinite Being.

It is absurd to say that with the death of the body the Indweller disintegrates. The soul is not the body. The old man looks at his own youthful photograph with inexpressible feelings: "Where has that body gone?" Yet, he is the same. Does the 5' 7" "Swami Venkatesananda" become "Swami Venkate" when his legs are amputated? Even if the whole body is taken away, he will still continue to be a distinct personality, disembodied, looking for another (as the legless man would look for artificial limbs) to live in, work and learn.

All that happens at birth is the union of that consciousness with the particular physical body. "Birth" is not a new creation. The expression is faulty, even as the expression "I woke up at 5 this morning" is faulty. If someone mildly pinched my foot at 4 a.m., I would have reacted; I was awake, only my consciousness was not linked to the outside world. This happened at 5 a.m. "I" was before my "date and hour of birth": At that hour "I" began to identify myself with this particular body and all that is related to it. Even so, I shall cease to identify myself with this body and move on; and that will be called my death... of course, wrongly too!

Someone wonders: "If I were here before, why do 1 not remember?' I have seen a girl who did remember her past birth! I have heard it said by many in regard to persons and places! "I am sure I have seen them before". These could be hallucinations, but they could also be symptoms of the truth. But does it matter if I am forgetful, if all of us are forgetful? I do not remember anything that happened in my early childhood; Does it mean that I never was a child?

The psychologist is clever and knows what sort of childhood experiences show up in the adult mind as what sort of manias, phobias and complexes. Commonsense ought to enable us to extend this a bit further and realise that the distinctive personality with which we were "born" now is the direct result of the essence of our thoughts, words and deeds in a past birth. These are embedded in us as "impressions" or samskaras, even as the knowledge of the textbooks studied at school survives in our mind as an impression, though the details have been wiped out. That is as it should be! Even the painter adopts this principle and "washes" the canvas during the process of painting, so that the colours may blend properly.

From this point of view, "death" is an essential part of evolution. We have acquired the experiences that a particular incarnation could give us: These have to be assimilated into our inner personality and the canvas prepared for the new strokes that the next birth would bring. It is at that stage tha Yama (the Deity presiding over Death) steps in. The word "Yama" in Sanskrit also means "control, restraint". Of course, Yama is personalised, but obviously the symbolism is this; it is the Power or the Intelligence that determines "that will do for now" and restrains us from wasting our time. Death is the great Regulator.

Man's departure from the world is followed by the Judgement! He stands before Yama, the Restrainer, and the latter's officer, Chitragupta, reads out the balance sheet of the mortal's life. (Chitra means picture; Gupta means hidden).

Where and how it is preserved is unnecessary for us to know; but it is good to remember that there is a hidden record, perhaps made by our own mind or the Unconscious, of all that we do in this life, and it is that which determines the next life.

Implied in the theory of reincarnation is the law of Karma. Take that away and life loses its meaning, spiritual endeavours their purpose, and God Himself becomes a capricious dictator, a whimsical tyrant. The Law of Karma is itself a witness that He is not.

CHAPTER XXII

AS YOU SOW' SO SHALL IT GROW

Both now and in the after life the evil doer suffers.

Both now and in the after-life the doer of good deeds rejoices.

LORD BUDDHA.

In the realm of Reality the arguments advanced in the previous chapters have no validity. In It, there are neither individual souls, nor ignorance nor reincarnation. This is boldly proclaimed by Sri Krishna in the Gita. "This Spirit is unborn, eternal, and is not killed when the body is killed". The two statements and states, one relating to the Absolute and the other to the relative, should not be con-fused; the world of waking experience and the dream-world are entirely different.

In the long dream or deluded state of ignorance which we call "life"-we search for happiness. Happiness is within us, in the Self, in God. We have already seen that the sole motive of creation was that the Supreme Bliss could be tasted by Him Who dwells in us. We go on searching for that Supreme Bliss. Ignorant of the Self, and because external objects alone can be grasped by our senses and mind, we seek a taste the Bliss in them. It happens that sometimes in the shadow of the ignorance of our true Divine nature we err and sometimes, also in our ignorance, we do that which is righteous, and each action produces its answering reaction.

The Law of Karma-one of the most notable feature of Indian philosophy—is the law of the gross physical universe. We go on sowing the seeds of right and wrong and unless we are able to raise ourselves above this earthly plane, we must feed upon the gathered harvest.

Even the man who "invented" electricity dare not violate the laws which govern it. As we sow so shall we reap—or rather, so shall it F of Karmans pestive boteithered, the

plane and not in the plane of the Absolute Self.

The Self or Atma is atomie in nature-the consciousness that dwells in each atom of our physical being. When the body is reduced to molecules and atoms, the consciousness still remains in each atom that is Atma. The law of Karma does not touch this Atma.

The law of Karma does not affect the Self, just as the wind cannot waft, water does not wet, nor does a stone injure the rays of the sun, whereas they affect gross physical objects like a piece of cloth. The Law of Karma operates in the physical world of relativity, and affets only the gross physical portion of our being. In the plane of the Absolute, the Law of Pure Being operates, where there is no cause nor. effct, no subject nor object, no birth nor death, no ignorance nor enlightenment.
If we synthesise the concepts of:—
(a) God as the Supreme Bliss,
(b) the Self as eternally pure silent witness,
(c) inevitability of perfection, and its concomitant,
(d) evolution of the soul from a state of nescience to a state of enlightenment,

we shall readily see that this Law of Karma is not a member of the Secret Police, but a traffic constable! The retribution guides us to right. action. The law cancels the cause by the effect. and restores equilibrium to the Self. This. appears to take the form of pleasure and pain! An intelligent look at the law of Karma enables. us to see that the reaction is really the best antidote to the poison of wrong action does in ignorance. God is not our enemy to visit us: with misery, disease, famine and pestilence! He is our fond mother who gives us a sweetmeat when we have done something good (to encourage us to do better) and also a dose of bitter medicine to neutralise the poison we have swallowed (to save our life). Properly understood, the Law of Karma is the manifestation of the supreme merey of the Lord Who is eagerly waiting for our soul to be purified, so-that it may find Him.

Karma means action and has a twofold effect or reaction:—

(a) It becomes a cause that rebounds as an effect, like a boomerang. The action sets up a vibration in the cosmos, and it must come back to its source to form and

complete a circle. (In these days of radar and radio, such concepts as these and of mythical weapons such as were used in the Mahabharata war which returned to the sender, should seem incredible). As long as we remain individuals or Jivas, so long shall we be the target of Karma. When we attain Self-realisation, the individual soul and its physical sheath (which is the target of Karma) do not exist distinct from the cosmic Being, and Karma, too, gets dissolved in the cosmos. "Every action has its equal and opposite reaction"-is a law of physies. Man wants happiness and therefore indulges in sensual enjoyment: With equal and opposite force it comes back to him as unhappiness. He wants to become rich and so commits robbery: It comes back to him as loss of possessions-poverty.

(b) Action that proceeds from us leaves a mental impression know as Samskara. This is more dangerous than the first effect as far as Yoga or the attainment of cosmic consciousness is concerned! It clamours for repetition, later it becomes a tendency and strengthens the evil shackle of ignorance that binds us to the cycle of birth and death. Why did that man steal? Because of ignor-ance. He did not know that Supreme Bliss was within him and could not be obtained by wrong means. But the action left in him an impression which demands repetition-acting as an inherent, self-renewing and self-sparking stimulus, not requiring the aid of an object of enjoyment. Terrible evidence of this is the tendency in a wrong-doer to commit similar crimes over and over again, in spite of being caught and receiving punishment. Even in the absence of an external provoking cause or agent, this impression stimulates him to repeat the wrong action, through memory of past experience. When this action is repeated, it tends to darken ignorance which was its own prompter and parent. This is a ghastly vicious circle. It forges one more link of bondage and ignorance
.
These Samskaras or impressions can be wiped out only by the practice of Yoga-which will be dealt with in the last chapter.

Let us look at the law of cause and effect. As we go on doing actions, these are recorded as impulses in the ether, in what Theosophists call the Akashic record. There is consciousness everywhere and it remembers what we do and what has been done. What is done in this life is remembered in God's mind as a picture according to the Holy Bible.

It is not, however, correct to say that God is watching us that He rewards and punishes us. The Omnipresent is not-need not be-aware of the particulars. He presents the Law, and it is the Law itself which then operates. The King and governors of a nation lay down the law, but they themselves, once it is laid down, are not aware of the particulars of its operation. The computer, set to its pattern by the master mind, operates infallibly without further direct guidance from that mind.

We saw that in Hindu mythology we have a God (Yama) who presides over the last moment of our life. He sends a messenger who takes us to his court. Yama has an accountant. (Chitragupta) who has with him a faithful and complete record of all our actions, good and bad. Chitragupta dwells in our shoulders, it has been said, thus closely watching all our actions! The name is significant. The picture of our own Karma is hidden in cosmie intelligence. It germinates and fructifies later.,

We go on performing actions and these impulses accumulate in cosmie intelligence. If we are to be punished for every one of our misdeeds, during a single birth, it would be unendurable. God is merciful, as the Holy Quran never fails to repeat. He apportions to each incarnation just so much of happiness and of unhappiness as will enable us to work out our Karma, learn our lessons smoothly, and evolve towards Perfection. He keeps a current account of our Karmas, as it were. This currect account of Karma is called Sanchita—a collection of Karmas in all our births.

As we incarnate in this world a portion of these Karmas is taken out of Sanchita and allotted to this birth, and this portion is called later. Prarabdha - the seed that has begun to germinate and fructify as sweet and bitter fruits, as pleasure and pain, etc. This Karma affects only the physical (including the subtly physical) body, and, if the mind is attached to it, it is also affected, otherwise it is not.

We are bombarded by the reactions of past actions. We do not accept them placidly, but react to them afresh, so creating more cause for further reaction. This fresh Karma is called Agami. Actions performed now will react later.

It may be asked: "You say that the world is illusory and there is no creation. There can then be no Karma or reaction. How does this reconcile with the theory of Karma?" The answer may thus be illustrated. When you are asleep and dream that a

thief is trying to kill you, you scream and perspire. The thief's action is the cause, and perspiration, the result. But all this was in sleep, which is ignorance of the waking world. You wake up, and the cause of your fear, the thief, vanishes. At once you know that he never really existed, yet the effect of your fear of him, perspiration, is still present– the very “real” effect mo no- cause! You may say that if the cause was illusory the effect must be illusory, but oddly enough this is not
so. The effect is real. In other words, here is no cause-effect relationship, not atleast, when you wake up.

Now, in our human life, we are ignorant of Reality. We are as if we were asleep, and it is during this sleep of ignorance that the cause-and-effect Law of Karma operates. Once we are awake, part again of the Cosmic Consciousness, Karma cannot operate, for it is meaningless.

In effect there are two Laws, the Law of the dream state, which is Karma, and the Law of the waking state. Neither law can operate in minutes travel round the world without a ticket. Impossible in the waking state. Each of these two states which alternate regularly in the life of every human being has its separate law governing it. Just so when we are "material" we are governed by material or physical laws. and when we are spiritual this ceases to operate for us.

Here on earth we have night and day, based on whether we face the sun or are turned away from it. But in the sun itself there can be no such distinction or calculation.

Related to this difficulty is another. Granted that this chain of action-and-reaction is rea!, its very nature indicates a beginning. Initially there was a Man and initially he committed a sin. Why did he sin? And who was he? The answer is clear. He was your own Self in its first embodiment. Take this thought, meditate upon it, realise it. It is a stone dropped into the pool of silence. Meditate upon that silence. If there comes an answer from that pool you will know, and if no answer comes you will know that the questions were meaningless. In Zen terminology that in what is called "Satori".

The orthodox philosopher has his reply. "Even as the universe is without beginning, so too is Karma". Such a reply is similar in construction to ones given by Fred Hoyle in his "Frontiers of Astronomy", to which I have already alluded.

The Indian philosopher, however, looks these hard questions more steadily in the eve, affrming that this beginningless cycle is not endless, anyway. Though we do not know the origin of ignorance we know that it has an end. To end it is the meaning and purpose of life and all spiritual endeavour. Indian philosophy, ever practical, seeks a technique for disentangling oneself from this cycle of the operation of Karma.

In our present incarnation prayer and right action can do much to overcome the effect of past action, though only to a limited extent. Raised above the Karmic plane there is another, where the Law of Grace operates. Think of the natural heat of summer. You want to be cool, and by equipping yourself with an air conditioner you can partly nullify the heat. Prayer, charity and right action are your air condi-tioner. Use these to counteract the effects of the heat of Karma and earn the coolth of Divine Grace.

A plane even above this Plane of Grace is the plane where the Law of Being operates, the plane of Self-realisation. One who raises to this sheds all trammels of the Law of Karma, for he has shed ignorance and therefore is no more an individual identifying his Self with the body and finite mind. He lives in Cosmic Consciousness. Though the momentum of past Karma seems to keep him in the body with apparent individuality, his consciousness has risen out of this grossness. He lives and works by the Divine Will, that dynamic aspect of Cosmie Consciousness, no longer spurred by selfish motives.

Such actions as he now performs can leave no impression upon his egotism for that no longer exists. The reservoir of past Karma, no longer fed through the channel of the ego, has dried up. The wise say that prarabdha (Karma which has begun to fructify, the arrow that has already left the bow), has to be worked out, even by the sage. One thing alone saves him. On account of past habit his body and mind loosely cling to the Self, but as he no longer identifies his Self with them, their fate has no

effect on him! So it is true to say that he does not reap past Karma. He does not have to.

As you sow, so does it grow-if you sow a mango pip a mango plant grows out of it, but you do not have to pick the mango fruit-you are not complleed to reap it. Only if you desire it do you reap it.

But when you sowed the seed, you had a desire and there was attachment to the action and the eventual reward. Attachment and desire almost compel you to reap the harvest.

The Bhagavad Gita admonishes you to eut down. attachment; in which case you need not reap the harvest.
Lord Buddha reminds us that Desire is alone the cause of this cause-and-effect chain, and Desire itself is born of Ignorance.

Since ignorance is the root-cause of this formidable series of ever-recurring stumblings along the road of Life, knowledge will put an end to it. Ignorance is the darkness of the dream, Knowledge is the brightness of awakeness. The terror and pain inflicted by the thie?. in-the-dream vanishes on our waking up.

Can we prove the Law of Karma? No one can. In metaphysics there is a delicate game! Can you prove anything absolutely? No. Take for instance the proposition: rain falls and therefore plants grow. But, why connect the two events? Well, you say, rain does not fall, and the plant dies! So what? Why MUST you ascribe a causal relationship? Again you say: it always happens that way! Even that is not a valid argument.

A thousand people may march through a desert every day for a thousand years and see a lake there. But still it is only a mirage. However, you can go to the scene and prove that it is a mirage. In the rain-plant analogy and in life you cannot go into the life and prove or disprove the causal relationship. You can only observe. The observation is always relative-the relative is within the field of logic and rationalisation.

Whether the theory of Karma can be satisfactorily proved or not, it confers this incalculable threefold benefit on man:—

(a) First and foremost, when in pain, suffering or distress or when subjected to dishonour, failure or calamity, man calmly resigns himself to Karma and accepts the reaction. This, however, should not be confused with fatalism. He does not become inert or inanimate! He puts forth fresh, positive, constructive and righteous efforts to improve his lot. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna assures us that we have a right to work, only we don't have a right to the fruits thereof which are determined by Him on the basis of past action.

This right will not be surrendered to Karma by the wise man. There should be no confusion in our minds in regard to Prarabdha (destiny) and Purushartha (self-effort). The first governs what we are to get in this life: The second governs what we do in this life, how we now react to what Prarabdha brings us.

Prarabdha is like the road laid for motor racing. Of course, you cannot cut across or take a short-cut. But within the allotted course, one has total freedom of action. The man who understands this secret wins the race. He does not brood or bother himself over the impossible:
He does not knock his head against a granite wall, but accepting the inevitable with calmnness, he seeks and finds the open door where he can, exercise his freewill and work for his betterment.

The acceptance of the reward of past action frees us from fruitless rebellion against it, which results in the lives of many people in a total waste of human energy: The man who accepts the Law of Karma uses this energy in the right direction which he sees on account of his mental equipoise.

Kham theor sing dei tie the tacality, long forward with cheer and optimism to a glorious future for which we work now, without grumbling and grousing and bemoaning of our fate.

(b) Secondly, we do not bear the least ill-will toards those who may harm us in any way. We realise that they are but instruments of our own past Karma. The

Bhagavatham puts these words into the mouth of Sunithi, addressed to her son Dhruva who had been insulted by his stepmother:—

"Entertain no evil thought about others, dear child. For a man reaps the very suffering he has inflicted on others". We radiate love towards all; and thus we evolve towards God-head.

(c) Thirdly, knowing that all our sufferings in this life have been brought on by our own evil actions in past ones, we desist from them now. It may be argued that since we do not know what suffering has been caused by what sin in the past, this punishment cannot be effective. I feel that the effectiveness lies in this ignorance. A young man goaled for theft comes out, and instead of turning away from thieving, tries to be more clever so that the next time the policeman does not catch him. Whereas when we do not know the cause of our suffering, we try to be good in all respects and try to avoid all sorts of unrighteous actions. The theory of Karma promotes righteousness here, and this in turn promotes the welfare of the whole community and leads the individuals closer to God.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FOUR IDEALS TO WORK FOR:

DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA, MOKSHA

The chief aim of man in life should be to acquire that exalted state of mind which is imperturbale, ever peaceful, free from grief and the pairs of opposites, acquiring which man becomes an instrument of God and divine energy pours forth through him. This is called liberation, or perfect freedom. Knowledge, unselfish action, service to others and one-pointed devotion to God, are the means whereby this liberation is obtained.

"Teachings from the Bhagavad Gita"

HARI PRASAD SHASTRI.

If a man says: "The sun rises in the West" well, perhaps his vocabulary is confused, and he identifies East with "West", and points Eastward calling it "West". If a man says: "The sun rains light", you still understand him, and appreciate his poetic vision. But if a man tells you that you can cool yourself near the furnace of a steel plant, in mid-summer, it is right to point out gently that such exposure can only have the opposite effect.

Sin cannot lead us to happiness. Vice cannot be transformed into virtue on the basis of the principle of majority, "everyone does so!" Vox-populi, vox dei - does not apply here. It is often the single Voice that represents Truth, - even so was the case with the mission of Lord Jesus, and of Mahatma Gandhi in our own times. When the majority go wrong, a single divinely inspired individual is able to resist them all, single-handed, and flood-light the path of righteousness. Righteousness alone can lead to happiness, to common-weal and to world-peace.

To evolve into cosmic consciousness we must busy ourselves with righteous actions. Sinful action binds because it invariably springs from spiritual darkness. Because it is born of light and divinity, Goodness leads us back to the Source of Light, God.

Though the comprehensive Hindu word "dharma" is often translated as "righteousness", its meaning is far wider than that. In one sense it is both conduct and the action resulting from conduct in obedience to God's law of creation — so dharma is also harmony in one's own plane.

A great Seer (Rishi), Kanada, defines Dharma as that which leads to the attainment of Abhyudaya (prosperity in this world) and Nihsreyasa (total cessation of pain and attainment of eternal, divine bliss). This prosperity is not secured at the expense of another; it 1s not exploitation. For we should not forget that the word Dharma is derived from a root which means "to hold together"-"to uphold and prevent us from falling", , that which holds the world together. Incidentally, it is highly interesting to note that the ancient Hindu was not narrow-minded and did not limit his aspiration to prosperity of himselm or his clan or nation, but extended it to all the inhabitants of the world. It becomes Dharma only if it achieves that.

The Hindus called even their religion the "Sanatana Dharma", the Eternal Dharma. It is eternally true. These are the immutable laws on which the universe has been "built up", Ike the first Principles or Axioms of the scientist. They promise prosperity and cessation from all pain to those who adhere to them. No one is exempt from their operation. Even as electricity obeys certain laws and will allow anyone who operates in obedience to these laws to derive benefit from its power, anyone (even if he is the discoverer of the electric power) who transgresses those laws receives an electric shock. To know, to understand and to live up to these Eternal Laws of Righteousness, is the First Ideal of the Hindu. These Ideals (called Purusharthas) are Four, viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.

Sage Vyasa, the celebrated author of the Mahabharata, exclaims "I declare with upraised arms: both wealth and happiness accrue from righteousness, why then, does not man walk the path of righteousness?

Liberation (Moksha) is the ultimate goal. The moment "liberation" is mentioned, people ask-"Are these Indians not interested in life at all?"

Mr. Anderson in his book called "The Secret of Secrets", says that the doctrine of reincarnation makes the Indian anxious to suffer in this generation so that he can go quickly on into the other world. What a sad misinterpretation of our view of life! We are asked to bear-with fortitude the suffering that normally falls to our lot, knowing that it is the working out of our own Karma. At a later stage of our evolution, when worldly pleasure ceases to tempt us and we seek the austere, simple life, we seem to suffer, in the eyes of the ignorant, worldly man, who cannot conceive that we are® happier than he!

His simple life, apparently his ceaseless suffering and trial, awakens in the spiritual seeker as in the lover of God, silently, miraculously, an awareness of the great Truth. Such a man is happy even in what others regard as poverty anu misfortune, a quality of happiness quite unlike that "happiness" given by all the wealth in the world.

Anderson's view of the Indian "anxious to-suffer" might mean Prayaschitta or atonement for sins-this is self-imposed corrective punishment, like Tapas

(mortification), to save us from greater misery hereafter. This is com-con law, common sense. The wise man acts as his own prosecutor, judge and gaoler! In this spirit did Lord Jesus speak in the Sermon on the Mount.

We are not only interested in Cosmic Consciousness. We are equally interested in living. None of our scriptures turns blind eye on life, nothing in life is ignored. We state emphatically that God-realisation is the ultimate goal of life and then declare how best to live that life. By living it in all the depth of our awareness we march steadfastly on the path to that goal.

Without even trying to understand, ignorant people often condemn Hindu religion and philosophy as "other-worldly", as pessimistic, and characterise it as "world-and-life-negation". How far from the truth! The Hindu has (or should have, if he lives up to his own religious teaching) a correct sense of proportion, and does not clothe the "things of the moment" with "the mantle of Eternity". In the wonderful words of Lord Jesus, he renders unto Caesar what belongs to him, and unto God what belongs to Him.

Far from asking (or even allowing, except in exceptional cases) man to renounce the world, the sage commands him to engage himself in righteous activities. There is a definite injunction to this effect in the Taittiriya Upanishad, during the course of what my Master has described as the ancient sage's "Convocation Address". The student, on completion of his education, is commanded by the Teacher- "Do not discontinue the family thread".

In the Scripture for the Modern Age-the Bhagavad Gita—we are given a clearer insight into the place that wealth and worldly pleasures ought to occupy in man's life. Lord Krishna again and again warns man against the idle, false renunciation of the world, and exalts "dynamism with detachment"-which is the most remarkable and unique doctrine of the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna even commands man even the wisest of men—to engage himself in activities with the same zeal displayed by the worldly man, but without attachment.

Nevertheless, our scriptures do warn us over and over again of the transitory nature of life and the inevitability of death. This is not pessimism, this is facing facts, a

signpost to warn us not to cling to this world as a permanent factor and thereby lose sight of the reality, a formula to help us cultivate a healthy acceptan of the facts of life and death.Deaths is word must be accepted as a punctuation in the song of immortality.

Artha (acquisition of wealth) is the second ideal of human life, though one should never forget that here, as in every other aspect of an ideal life, the means are as important as the end, and the mode of earning that wealth, the way it is preserved and the manner in which it is spent, are all important and should be righteous all through.

Amassing wealth by unrighteous means is condemned by Krishna as diabolical.

Similar is the case with Kama (worldly enjoyment). Hindu Dharma (Santana Dharma) is not suicide. It does not make you (nor even allow you to become) a kill-joy. the contrary, by leading man along the path of righteous enjoyment which necessarily involves moderation, it gives him freer, fuller and richer scope for enjoyment. In fact, in the Gita, Lord Krishna describes Kama (desire for worldly enjoyment) as His own manifestation, with this very important proviso: "I am Kamma in those beings who are not unrighteous". Lord Buddha points out that the evil man's heart is restless, whereas the man who does good is ever at peace within himself. The righteous man, therefore, lives in a state which enables him to derive maximum joy out of the righteous pleasures of life.

Granted these three, Dharma, Artha and Kama, the Hindu never forgets that there is a Fourth Ideal-Moksha or Liberation-which is the end and aim of the first three, of life itself. Constant remembrance of this prevents him

from getting lost in material possessions or pleasures. It does not drive him away from them, but it prevents him from getting drowned in them. Neither one who keeps out of the sea nor who gets drowned in it, but he who swims in it gets the maximum delight and benefit. That is precisely what Sanatana Dharma wants us to do with life.

The pattern of life is quite clear now. Note the order in which these four ideals of life are presented. Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. Wealth and enjoyment are

flanked by Dharma and Moksha on both sides. There is great meaning in this. Wealth and Pleasure, which are the pursuits of all beings, are like the waters of a river. Dharma (Righteousness) and Moksha (Liberation) are like the two banks. If the river flows within these banks, then it can irrigate the fields, promote prosperity, cool and refresh man. It is a boon.

But the moment the river breaches the banks, the very waters which brought prosperity and happiness, spell death and ruin. They can wipe out villages, kill human beings and cattle and destroy crops. This is a good lesson to bear in mind.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FOUR SECTIONS OF LIFE AND THE FOUR LIMBS OF SOCIETY

The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the differentiation of Guna and Karma; though I am the author thereof, know Me as the non-doer and immutable.

GITA.

A special feature of Indian religion is its meticulous analysis, always with a practical end in view. The laws of righteousness are constituted in detail. A righteous life is divided into four periods or stages:—

1. Brahmacharya-Studentship, involving discipline, particularly continence.
2. Grihastha-household life.
3. Vanaprastha—a retired reclose.
4. Sanyasa-wandering monk.

A boy of seven is invested with the holy thread and sent to the house of a Guru. He lives there a disciplined life and learns the scriptures. He lives with the Guru until he is able to absorb as much philosophy and knowledge of the secular arts and

sciences as possible. On completion of this period of studentship, the pupil offers to the Master whatever he can towards the tuition fees and returns home.

Teaching in those days was not a business or profession. The teacher felt-"It is my duty to propagate this knowledge. As the Veda says: we must not neglect our duty of acquiring and disseminating knowledge".

Around this vital task the Indian often wove a superstition:—

"If you die without imparting to someone else, the knowledge you possess, you will roam restlessly as an evil spirit".

If the student had no money or if he did not want to marry, he would choose to serve the Guru, offering himself as the Dakshina (fees). He was however, encouraged to lead a righteous householder life (Grihastha)), when his son was old enough to take over the responsibilities of the household, he and his wife would take up their abode outside the village in a small dwelling. They snapped the ties binding them to the household.

This is Vanaprastha, a life of seclusion, devoted to the study of scriptures. This is the training ground for Sanyasa (the fourth or the last stage of life. A Sanyasi is a monk and leads a life of total renunciation. The seeds of righteousness were sown in him when he entered the house of the teacher. They germinated and grew when he led the life of a householder. earning wealth and enjoying the pleasures of life righteously. They blossomed when he led the life of a recluse, and eventually when he renounced the world and became a monk, they bore for him the abundant fruits of Self-knowledge.

We shall discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter.

This world is not our permanent abode. We are here only as pilgrims. We have colonised this earth, where we can earn a wealth of merit (Dharma) and then we will pass on. The world is a colony, not a permanent abode. Our destination is the attainment of God-realisation, and only God is our Permanent Abode. Righteousness leads us closer to Him and the knowledge of the Reality. We must, therefore, acquire

more and more knowledge to remove the veil of ignorance. Only knowledge can liberate us.

Individual and collective righteousness must be préserved. Knowledge must be acquired, preserved and propagated. We must take note of the existence of the world and the existence of people with different temperaments and potentialities on different levels of evolution.

In order to preserve harmony, to conduct the affairs of the world efficiently with the minimum expenditure of human physical and mental energy, leaving the rest for the attainment of higher spiritual goals, and in order to channelise everyone's temperament and aptitude in the right direction, the ancients divided the community into four castes-Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra.

(a) Brahmana:
His main duty was to study the scriptures and teach. He was devoted to God and was himself the abode of virtues.

(b) Kshatriya:
His duty was to preserve law and order, administer the nation and defend it from enemies.

(e) Vaisya:
His field was commerce, industry and agriculture.

(d) Sudra:
His speciality was service of all.
If all became Brahmanas who would give us our food? Brahmanas concentrating on dissemination of knowledge and recital of the Mantras, will not be able to produce food, nor will they be able to safeguard themselves from evildoers. The Vaisya produced and shared wealth. The Kshatriya ruled the nation, and the Sudra served them all.

By doing their own duties they attained Knowledge- theoretically from the Brahmana who shared it with them, in return for their services to him, and practically by living a life of selflessness.

The duties of each did not overlap. Nowadays there is too much overlapping of duties. Everyone wants to become a pundit and politician, industrialist and civil servant—with the result that there is no time nor the requisite energy or state of mind to do anything properly. We all tend to become "Jack of all trades, but master of none".

Aldous Huxley says in "The Perennial Philosophy" :-

"Any confusion of castes, any assumption by one man of another's vocation and duties of state is always, say the Hindus, a moral evil and a menace to social stability. Thus, it is the business of the Brahmans to fit themselves to be seers, so that they may be able ta explain to their fellowmen the nature of the universe, of man's last end and of the way to liberation.

When soldiers or administrators, or usurers or manufacturers or workers usurp the functions of the Brahmans and formulate a philosophy of life in accordance with their variously distorted notions of the universe, then society is thrown into confusion.

Similarly, confusion reigns when the Brahman, the man of non-coercive spiritual authority, assumes the coercive power of the Kshatriya or when the Kshatriya's job of ruling is usurped by bankers and stock-jobbers, or finally when the warrior caste's dharma of fighting is imposed, by conscription, on Brahman, Vaisya and Sudra alike.

The history of Europe during the middle age and renaissance is largely a history of the social confusions that arise when large numbers of those who should be seers abandon spiritual authority in favour of money and political power. And contemporary history is the hideous record of what happens when political bosses, business men or class-conscious proletarians assume the Brahman's function of formulating a philosophy of life, when usurers dictate policy and debate the issue of

war and peace, and when the warrior's caste duty is imposed on all and sundry, regardless of: psycho-physical make-up and l vocation".

The caste system was originality meant for admmistrative convenience. It utilised each individual's talents for the benefit of all, and each evolved in his own way.

Each one's temperament and Karma decided the caste. The man who was soft and would not hurt a fly was a Brahmana. A virile man was a Kshatriya. The man with the calculating brain was a Vaisya. One who did not have any specific characteristic but possessed the spirit of service was a Sudra. No one was considered superior or inferior. Here and there in our scriptures we see that the Brahmana was exalted above all for the very simple reason that he was the repository of Vedic knowledge, he knew the scriptures and, above all, he was the abode of virtues. Such a Brahmana ought to be adored-and people will do so even without being told to. But the same Brahmana, by virtue of his humility, will not wish to be adored, nor will he take undue advantage of his position in society. This again is the law of nature, the humble man is glorified and the arrogant man who seeks that glory is trampled under foot!

The four castes were really regarded as different parts of the body of God. The Purusha Sukta of the Veda gives a beautiful description of this, with the people of different. castes forming the different parts. All of them constituted one whole. Each part is as essential and vital as the others. Our feet are as important as our head. Water-tight compartmentalisation, superiority and inferiority complexes, are the creations of the diseased human brain and the glorious caste system itself is not to blame for these.

Viewed in its right perspective, it is the product of the highest intelligence and wisdom and hence we assign the authorship to God Himself) and is one of the wonderful features of Indian philosophy and religion. But we should always bear in mind the wise words of Sri Ramanuja Acharya,

"If caste becomes the mother of conceit, then there could be no more formidable a foe. Better i senes, you from evil, you cannot find a better friend”.

Srimad Bhagavatham equates these four after" Moksha-not only his own, but others', as his was the task of holding the torch of righteousness and knowledge aloft. The Kshatriya was given to Kama-enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, righteously. In the same way, the Vaisya was devoted to Artha, righteous earning and production of wealth. And the Sudra it was who worked for Dharma! He served all and made it possible for them to preserve Dharma. And, Bhagavatham specifically says:—

"From the Lord's feet was evolved the calling of service, which is essential for the discharge of all sacred duties, and for carrying on this pursuit was produced of yore the Sudra, whose very occupation secures the pleasure of the Lord".

The same scripture further declares:—

"If what has been declared to be a characteristic of the grade in society of a man is perceived in another, the latter should be distinctively called by that very denomination (caste)."

It is the nature or characteristic that decided the caste. The latter quotation also reveals that one could change his "caste of birth".

The ery to abolish the caste system is obviously communistic in origin-the eagerness to create a classless (and therefore casteless)

society. Has this been possible even in communistic countries? Do they not approve of differences based on talents and aptitudes? Do they not select their astronauts-all cannot qualify for this!

Lord Krishna declares that guna (quality, nature, aptitude, talent) and karma (actual performance or action) determine the caste. To some extent this runs in the family and can therefore be inherited-a businessman's son will any day excel me in business even if I take a diploma in business management, for he has been brought up in a business atmosphere, and, as we commonly say-"Business runs in his veins". But this is not always the case and one should consciously strive to live up to the standards of one's caste. No businessman would lend a man money or give him his

daughter in marriage, merely because the latter's ancestors were rich, if he himself is a bankrupt, with no business acumen.

Yudhisthira emphasised that a person should not be considered a Brahmin just because he was born in a Brahmin family, nor need he be a Sudra even though his parents were Sudras (Mahabharata, Vana Parva, 180).

Ultimately all are one that is the ideal which should not be lost sight of. But it is the Indian genius—far from the baseless charge to the contrary-which takes note of the realities of life and organises life and society.

Buddhism revolted against the caste system (no doubt degenerate even at that time) and tried to abolish it; but it had to invent its own, as is shown in the following extract from an interesting article "Married Mahayana Monks" by Khantipalo Bhikku in "The Maha Bodhi" (September 1962) :

"Nepal: One finds among the Newars, a mainly Buddhist people, the contradiction of the caste system which has been imposed on them by centuries of Hindu influence and domination. The highest castes are the Vajracharyas who are the descendants of Tantric teachers and Bhikshus of eminence ... they perform the ceremonies and minister in religious matters to the other Buddhists and have been described to me as 'Buddhist Brahmins' or 'priests' who worship the 'gods' (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas). What sad degeneration is here!"

Is all this due to Hindu influence? The author himself provides the answer a little later in the same article, though he does not realise it!

"In Tibet, the study of Sutras is mostly done by Bhikshusthey alone have time to properly absorb the intricacies of, say, the Prajnaparamita doctrine".

That is the truth. These people automatically become the Brahmins, or the custodians of the scriptural knowledge, who are venerated by the people for that reason. It is true however, that this position of vantage and the power that goes with it corrupt the Brahmin class.

Many of the Brahmins in ancient India indulged in trade, yet they did to some extent live up to their ideals. Even as late as the thirteenth century, the Italian traveller Marco Polo paid them a glowing tribute in these words:—

'I assure you that these Brahmins are among the best traders in the world and the most reliable. They would not tell a lie for anything in the world and do not utter a word that is not true... They eat no meet and drink no wine. They live very virtuous lives according to their usage. They have no sexual intercourse except with their own wives. They take nothing that belongs to another. They would never kill a living creature or do any act that they believe to be sinful".

("The Travels of Marco Polo")

I visualise the process of degeneration as follows:-The first generation of Brahmins was pure and noble (Satvic). They had knowledge and they led an austere and simple life. They learnt and taught scriptures and received- charity which they spent in charity.

The second generation saw the external actions of the first. Inner wisdom was ignored, but the external learning and forms were acquired. Wealth grew in importance on account of the lack of Jnana or wisdom.

The third generation mistook this to mean that learning was the profession (trade) of the second generation,-means to an end, viz., wealth. Wealth was to be acquired for its own sake. Since the third had accumulated wealth of the first two, it felt even learning was unnecessary. We therefore had a generation of Brahmins who were landlords and traders. There was hardly an incentive or a need to alter this course of degeneracy.

But it is very bad policy to pull down the roof because there is a small leak in it. We should take steps to repair it. A close study of our own scriptures will reveal that this spring-cleaning has effectively been carried out by the Lord Himself. Whenever a particular community or caste deviated from the path ofvirtue, He has descended as an Avatara to restore Dharma. That is what is urgently necessary today.

The five fingers of the hand are different in size, shape and utility. We do not have to alter this circumstance. But it is enough if we bear in mind that they all belong to one person, to whom they are all equal in value. People nf different castes, occupation and trades are children of one Father, to whom all are equal.

This was emphasised and ensured by the division of the life of all into the four stages mentioned earlier. As students they were all brought together and even as Vanaprasthas (recluses) and Sanyasis (renunciates) they mingled freely as one. These two, viz.. the caste system and the stages of life served as the warp and woof of the fabric of life.

Hence this aspect of Indian religion was always referred to as Varna-ashrama Dharma (ethics of caste and stage of life). The breakdown of the latter is truly responsible for the chaos that now prevails.

We cannot abolish the principle on which the caste system is based; any attempt to do so will only create the same caste system in another form-remedy worse than disease!

CHAPTER XXV

LIFE - IT'S STAGES AND GOAL

Not by work, not by offspring, or wealth; only by renunciation does one reach life eternal.

KAIVALYA UPANISHAD

With their genius for analysis Indians have divided life into four stages as I pointed out in the previous Chapter, viz., studentship or Brahmacharya, the life of the householder or Grihastha, the life of a recluse or Vanaprastha, and the life of a renunciate monk or Sanyasa. the ultimate goal of life is moksha or liberation, this is the process best geared to achieve it.

In ancient practice a young boy was taken from his home and sent to a Guru, by whom the foundation for his life was laid. The tree must grow from the healthy seedling. He must early learn to withstand such passing phenomena as pleasure without losing his head and pain without losing hope. If the tree is allowed to harden before it is trained no training is possible.

In modern times children are being used as guinea pigs. Discipline is regarded as a hindricte to the child expressing itself! A standard dictionary will tell you that teducatios is the systematic training of moral and intellectual faculties. This will not suppress a child's personality but rather guide it, developing its character as a foundation for the spiritual and intellectual faculties which lie within it. To stuff a young brain with knowledge that is mostly useless is too often the aim of modern education. The tradition that once prevailed in India was the antithesis of this. Though given an important place, text book learning was secondary to character building.

If we rightly understood the implications of modern research into the development of the human body and faculties from birth to death which implies that foundation of character is laid down by the age of five and developed by the age of ten, we should start by character molding during all those earlier years and only go on to book learning in the 'teens when the brain is fully grown and able to assimilate facts quickly and efficiently.

This in fact was the pattern of education in ancient India. At the age of seven or eight a boy was invested with the holy thread handed over to the Acharya or Teacher. and His father, however highly qualified, was never his teacher, for it was considered that the son would have neither sufficient respect nor the necessary receptivity and that the father's. affection would interfere with the strict discipline inherent in effective training.

This traditional story is significent. A young boy was a resident scholar and the teacher's wife acted as his foster mother. She nurtured him well, without forgetting that he was there for discipline and moral development. Self control was best taught at that early age. As soon as the boy entered the Gurukula the extremely bitter though

healthy oil of neem seed was added to his food, instead of the ghee used in his home. Absorbed wholly in his studies the boy was not conscious of what he was eating.

Though mainly scriptural, secular learning was not neglected. He studied the texts of Arthashastra (economies), Ayurveda (medicine), Dhanurveda (warfare), Jyothisha (astronomy), geography and mathematics. After years of study, when he was no longer a boy but a young man, he suddenly became conscious of the bitter taste of his food. He pointed this out to his foster mother, who immediately told his teacher. At once, the teacher lovingly advised the boy to leave the Gurukula, for his senses were awakened and sought pleasure - this was the signal for the end of his studentship. (Brahmacharya in a narrow sense means celibacy. Its wider meaning is "moving in God and being in control of the senses").

The Acharya then showered his pupil with blessings, and encouraged him to go home and get married, to protect Dharma and lead a righteous life. Such a teacher's invocation to his pupil is recorded in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

The cultivation of good habits in his teacher's house now stood the young man in good stead. He knew what was right and wrong behaviour, and could enter a profession with a steady mind. A bad habit laid down in youth is almost impossible to eradicate. I know of a great yogi, an Avadhuta, a monk, leading a very holy life, completely naked, having no possessions — except his snuff box! He could renounce home, wife and wealth, but not the snuffing habit he had contracted in his youth!

There was no hint of "sinfulness" in leading a householder's life - on the contrary it was held in high esteem. A student could not earn, so had to depend on the householder. The recluse as also the renunciate, the Sanyasi, had also to depend on the family man. He was the pivot of the whole social structure. His duty and privilege was to uphold Dharma, fulfilling the scriptural injunctions and begetting progeny so that his children in their turn could uphold Dharma.

A firm Hindu belief is that everyone is born with three debts to discharge :

1. study and teaching of the seriptures discharges the debt to the sages,

2. begetting children discharges the debt to the manes and ancestors.
3. worship and sacrifice, also in the form of charity and selfless service to mankind discharges the debt to the gods.

The Manusmriti, formulated by Manu and an ancient Hindu code reminiscent of the Mosaic Law, insists that one who neglects these debts will fall in the scale of spiritual evolution. If these facts are understood, the charge that Indians were other-wordly is seen to be absurd.

The third stage in Hindu life was when a man's sons were ready to take over the reins of the household. Then he and his wife retired to a secluded spot, supported now by his sons who also nurtured their mother if she did not want to accompany her husband. In seclusion the scriptures were studied from a new spiritual and esoteric angle. Here memories could be refreshed and life devoted to meditation and godly living. The duties of the householder had been fulfilled, but even this spell of recluse life (Vanaprastha) was only a probation for the final stage of renunciation or Sanyasa. As a renunciate monk the man became homeless, never staving in one place, always contemplating the Self, but illuminating the hearts of all. Allied with these four stages is the division of the Vedas into four sections — Mantras (Samhita), Brahmana, Aranyaka and the Upanishad.

Mantras: it was the student who learned them.

Brahmana: when he married he put what he learned into practice, engaging himself in rituals which are described in this part of the Vedas.

Aranyaka: in the new light dawning from: experience the recluse studied the hidden truths, clothed in ritual of the first two sections.

Upanishad: renouncing all these former studies, he wandered about as a monk meditating on the highest wisdom as contained in the Upanishads.

Up to this point there was rigid uniformity.: everyone followed this striet pattern of life in its outward details. Wholly different was the attitude towards the goal to which

all these. practices led. The only unity was in regarding Moksha as the goal, but as to its attamment and the definition of Liberation, there were numerous views.

Hinduism is a parliament of religions, not one set of dogmas. Anyone is a Hindu who, in any concept of the ultimate truth in any state® or form believes in the Ultimate Reality. Hence, in a manner of speaking, every man is a Hindu, whether he adores God, Atman, Christ, Allah, Krishna or Buddha. Because of temperamental differences between man and man, each lives on a separate plane. Even the temperaments of Identical twins differ, if nothing else in them differs!

The great ones declare that each individual's equipment forces him to approach that single goal, the recognition of Ultimate Reality, from the angle equivalent to his powers.

Convenience allows us to refer to these as various schools of thought, but within each school there are many divisions and subdivision, many facts, many sects. The same condition has arisen in other religions attempting total uniformity of detail. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam all started as homogeneous movements, often as reaction against heterogeneity in older faiths, but as time passed the inevitable process of division and subdivision was also evident in them. The process continues even in our materialistic age when religion takes second place in our lives. The truth is that each and every man who has sought and found the Ultimate Truth has his own school.

One reason why the Indian is ready to accept immigrant faith is that in his view there are as many religions as seekers after the Truth. This sharpens his understanding, for he realises that though there are many and often conflicting schools of thought, each, if it survives, is conveying part of the truth. Attempts to analyse and express the Ultimate Truth must be relative and therefore partial - but never false. Indian philosophers recognise that all such genuine attempts to express truth aro. valid.

Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti - Truth is one, sages speak of it variously. Perhaps our best approach to the diversity of God's creation is diversity in our approach to Him. Through His own illusory power He creates this world endiversity its the

human it allet, ang t the own Mother! Viewed from such an angle every such concept is Truth.

The popular story of the blind men and the elephant illustrates the falsehood of finite concepts of the Infinite but misses a vital Truth. Each blind man caught hold of a part-the ear, the tall, the trunk, etc., and described the beast as a tan, a broom, a pillar, etc. Each touched the elephant and described it differently because of the point of contact. The statement of each was true, and yet it was false because none had conceived of the whole animal. But, one vital truth has been ignored. Pinch the elephant's ear and the whole elephant will react! Feed a coconut into his mouth and the whole elephant will be pleased! In other words, the part and the whole are One, or at least united in Reality.

Disregarding the superficial differences, the grain of Truth hidden in each philosophical concept is valuable. No school of thought leads us into the Ultimate Goal, they only lead us up their avenue to it. Before the door we all stand, awaiting the helping hand of God's Grace to open it.

There are five main highways (all fed by numerous byways to the central Goal-Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

CHAPTER XXVI

YOGA

Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, work for My sake, bow down to Me. Thou shalt come even to Me; truly do I promise unto thee.

GITA

(1) HATHA YOGA:

The embodied and body-conscious being (not' a disparaging statement, but one which covers 99.9 recurring per cent of humanity) is :

(a) reluctant to concede that the world is a non-existent dream, or illusion of an existent Reality, and
(b) unready and unable to ignore the aches and pains of his physical, vital and mental cloaks. With the rarest exceptions, all people are body bound and conditioned to the confusion of identification between the body and the soul!

It is all very well to theorise - "I am not the body nor the mind; I am Immortal Self": While this has its value, and therefore use, what we are looking for is an actual transcendence, not merely wishful thinking. One of the methods advocated is "Hatha Yoga". The uniqueness of Hatha Yoga consists in its recognition: of the physical body itself as the crystallisation of the psyche and therefore the proper vehicle of the soul. Its philosophy appeals to mau since it stoops to conquer him, and does not demand that he pull himself up by his socks.

Dismissing the macrocosmic as the infinite magnification of the microcosmic, Hatha Yoga busies itself with the definition of the latter. Up in the head of Man is the seat of Consciousness. It is not the dead matter of brain cells, but what is in them, what works through them, that of which the cells are but the abode. Throughout this discussion of Hatha Yoga this fact must be borne in mind; the Yogi does not concede means or an excuse for dealing with the psychic.

Consciousness itself is Power, Life, Energy all the time. Consciousness and Power differ only in their polarity. This Consciousness, when It willed to see, developed eyesight and physical eyes. Similarly Its will developed other faculties and vital organs. Having brought three faculties into being, It identified Itself with them and developed individuation. This individual had to llve; that meant eating, drinking, digesting, assimilation and elimination of waste products.

Consciousness, now as positive Power (Prana) extended Itself further down and became the negative Power (Apana) with the functions just mentioned. The urge to Immortality, when it was clouded by the veil of ignorance and perception of the death of the physi. cal being, resulted in procreation as a convenient substitute! Consciousness projecting Itself as Life now became blindly involved in ignorant activity and endless, helpless automation.

The escape from this self-willed prison lies in arresting this downward motion of Consciousness. This was referred to by my Master Sri Swami Sivananda as "turning the river back to its own source". The Hatha Yogi's method here is simple, direct and credible. The process of polarisation should be reversed; Life, Power or Energy should be re-converted into Consciousness. Energy in the human being has a tendency to "leak" and this dissipates what is in fact Consciousness that has been converted linto energy. This "leakage" weakens the vision of Truth, and enfeebles the enjoyment of Peace and Bliss. This "leakage" must be arrested.

How is this done? By the practice of Hatha Yoga.

"Ha" is the Sanskrit root-syllable for the solar or positive energy (Prana). "Tha" (pronounced as in tennis) is the Sanskrit monosyl-Jable for the lunar negative energy (Apana); Because this process involves their fusion, it is called Hatha Yoga. Their union is the essential preliminary to the arrestation of the diffusion of Life which in turn leads on to the experience of that undifferentiated Consciousness which does not flow down to the lower centres as Power.

The first union of the Prana and the Apana is effected in the solar plexus. This process can be compared to the New Moon phenomenon when the sun shines on its own, without sharing its lustre (so to say) with even the moon.
In this as well as in the process of withdrawing the energy from the various centres, the Yogi needs to exercise striet control of his physical being in its most vital aspects.

This control is acquired by the various Yoga Postures (Yoga Asanas) which in the popular mind assume the status of Hatha Yoga itself, though they are really just the preliminary lessons. Only when the life-currents flow through nadis (astral channels for the flow of Prana— which vaguely correspond to the nerves and or blood vessels), can Prana discharge its function of preserving health and be withdrawn from the organs it activates. It is like the gears of a motor car. Only when the power is connected to the wheels can the latter be controlled, moved forward or stopped.

In the normal man, the Prana flows haphazard without proper control or direction, as a motor car careering down hill in neutral gear. If everything seems to go right, it is only because the free ride has not yet been challenged by a turn, bump or

obstruction! The Yogi cannot afford to leave this vital process to chance. Each Asana or posture ensures that certain nadis or channels are cleared and certain centres are vivified.

Coupled with Pranayama or exercise or control of the life-force (Prana) with the help of the breath, these Yoga Asanas can and do ensure our physical health and mental poise, easing our tensions and filling us with peace. But that is just a by product however desirable, and should not usurp the place of the main objective, which is clearing the nadis as a prelude to effective control of Prana.

The Yogi makes much use of Pranayama.
He has at his disposal a number of variations of it which exert the influence most desired at each stage, as he works towards the final fusion of the Prana and the Apana at the solar plexus. The positive and the negative coming together there spark off great power at the solar plexus. Maybe it is to this the physiologist alludes when he describes the action of the suprarenal glands in times of emmergency and extraordinary stress.

Here again the Yogi does not let the control even over this psychic "heat" or energy get out of hand. Using definite techniques, he directs it to the base of the spinal cord where, he believes, the polarised Consciousness as energy lies coiled up, after having spent a little part of itself in vitalising the various centres along the spinal cord.

The orthodox Yogi will be annoyed at this physiological equation. From his point of view it is our profanity that deludes up into equating these psychie nadis and centres to the spinal cord and the plexuses of nerves related to it. Nadi literally means a fow, flowing vibrations of energy. The Yogi had forestalled Einstein's "wave-theory" of light or energy.

Between the base of the spine and the centre of the forehead the psychic "tube" that serves as the channel of polarity has six chakras (circles or wheels) which are also described as lotus. The spokes of the wheel or the petals of the lotus are visualised to have very definite correspondence with distinct ' nerve-trunks branching off each plexus. But the Yogi ascribes more to them than mere nerve-function. He connects them with the basic (five) elements the sixth with the subtlest, which is the mind.

The first (Muladhara) is at the astral centre corresponding with the perineum. It represents the earth element, has four "petals" and the sound-symbol that is associated with the earth element is LUM. The Yogi believes that that is the vibratory note produced by the element itself! By intoning it, therefore, he can tune-in to it. It is surprising that we should call the earth "land" in English! Perhaps it is true that the mystics of the East and the West did hear the vibratory note of the earth element as "LUM".

Once the Yogi learns the art of grasping the polarised consciousness (known as the Kundalini Shakti) with the help of the psychic heat, then he can deliberately guide its ascension from centre to centre. From the Muladhara there the Paths ties attart, po takes pt to. cord, the Centre that represents Water (with. VUM as its code-nameVum and Water are-phonetically similar). The association with water is obvius. Vum is also the mystic syllable for "nectar of immortality", a truth which we shall appreciate if we remember that this. Centre is physically associated with the reproductive organs.

The Shakti then proceeds to the next Centre, Manipura, behind the navel. The element here is fire, and the code-syllable "RUM" (Ra for hte Egyptian Sun God! Red for fire!). The situation is that of the gastrie fire. The next Centre is 'Anahata, behind the heart. The mystic letter is YUM (for air, the element of this Centre-naturally because the lungs and the heart lie closely to it!)

From there on to the Vishuddha Centre at. the throat. Ether or space is the element. here, and "HUM" is the Mantra. When you hum the sound "HUM" the space in the throat expands! The last in this series is the Ajna Centre between the eyebrows. It is the "seat" of the mind, as it were, and the Mantra is the holy monosyllable "OM". It is known as Ajna because it is through this (the occult associate it with the Third Eye) that the Yogi receives Divine Command and Divine Grace. Ascent beyond to the seat of consciousness is effected by Divine Grace. The Yogi then brings the Power down again through the successive chakras, to enable him to live and function in a Divine way.

The student of Yoga practises what is known as Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, Kundalini Yoga or Kriya Yoga daily. Daily he visualises the whole process actually taking place. Nothing may actually take place for a long time not till his heart is purified, his mind steadied, and the power then awakened. Yet, the very visualisation helps him, for the concentrated mind directs the Prana to those centres, corrects any defects there may be in the flow of Prana, promotes health and brings near the day on which the visualisation might become actualised.

By the Grace of God, the Yogi might ultimately take the Power up to the Eyebrow Centre. There he waits for Divine Grace to lift him up at last to the "thousand-petalled Lotus" the seat of Consciousness. But the ego has "no admission" here!

Though the whole process seems to be confined to the physical and in any case individual being, the Yogis assure us that at each stage, the practitioner tunes in to the corresponding cosmic forces. Exactly in the same way a radio receiving set is tuned in to the broadcasting stations of the world. When the Kundalini Shakti reaches the thousand-petalled lotus of Consciousness at the crown of the head, not only self-Consciousness, but Cosmic Consciousness is attained, for there is really no difference between the two.

(2) Karma Yoga:
Twice in the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna emphasises an undisputed fact-"No one can remain inactive even for a moment', and again, "No embodied being can give up activity completely".

The same activity that greases and fuels the wheel of Karma or the Law of Causation, the very same activity that keeps man in bondage when performed in ignorance, can also help. liberate him when done in the light of knowledge. In fact, Krishna makes a point of insisting that even the man of Enlightenment should (not merely will) be active. Though he will not necessarily wear an external mark of enlightenment, he will reveal it in the spirit of detachment that characterises his attitude: towards the world and its work.

The Bhagavad Gita itself is a tiny part of a voluminous epic, the Mahabharata. The latter, considered historical by the Indians, is of the same pattern as most world

legends; it portrays the conflict between the forces of Light andi darkness, the near-collapse of righteousness, divine intervention and the ultimate triumph: of the forces of Light after being subjected to inhumanities by the forces of darkness. This: confliet is truly subjective, though circumstances do play their part; and that is why the art of dealing with it is so important and so difficult. It rears its head in the life of man every day and in the life of the watchful one even oftener. To do or not to do, says Krishna, puzzles even the wise.

What is truth, ask the self-satisfied and stay not for an answer. The contentment of the complacent is deceptive and symptomatic of his. spiritual slumber. An awakening soul stirs, so that within the heart of an awakening man stir many conflicting thoughts and emotions. They are not "obstacles" but strengtheners and stabilisers. They infuse inner spiritual strength and, by enabling Man to resolve the conflict once for all, lead him to permanent satisfaction in the Self.

The Mahabharata's forces of Light are the Pandavas and its forces of darkness are the Kauravas - yet they are cousins! The latter. strive to eliminate the former by every means possible. ThePandavas had, as a last resort, to take up arms. But on the field of battle when everybody is getting ready to strike, Arjuna, the pride of the Pandavas, refuses to fight. "conflict of duty" reaches its climax and triggers off the revelation of the Gita by Krishna. Arjuna's confusion vanishes and the Pandavas win.

Krishna's way is-"to do, feeling 'I do not do'; to be ever active, but never lose sight of the Cosmic Divine Ground; to do one's duty, without attachment, egoism or selfish desire".

Like the philosophy of Hatha Yoga, the Karma Yogi, too, recognises the existence of the world, but not as a playground or pleasure-resort of Man. It is the Nature of God made manifest; it is the Body of God. The human soul exists as an almost independent being, with a freedom of choice and freedom to act; though in reality it is a "cell' in the Body of God. Its or the tene though mis absoltely rest, is teal is created by a mysterious power of illusion which is also Divine! Like smoke born of fire veils the fire itself, illusion born of God veils then. is nothing outstab cously a thet that intelligence and illusion originate in Him, as light and smoke (darkness) are

produced byfire. The soul under subjection to this illusion desires and hates and thus wilfully forgets the Divine Ground.

Karma Yoga cuts the diamond with a diamond. Krishna, the incarnate God who, in His Bhagavad Gita, enunciated the principles of Karma Yoga, analyses the problem clearly and holds up as the foes of Man, "lust and anger', or "love and hatred". Even these two could be reduced to the single factor, Desire, which has anger or hatred as its natural counterpart. Lord Buddha was specific about this basic (or perhaps only) enemy of man. Man is impelled to act, by desire. Desire is for pleasure, profit or power. Krishna keeps the action which is inevitable for such is the Divine Will), but warns against the threefold desire. Desire disturbs the equilibrium of the mind. Hence the Yoga of Krishna is characterised by equilibrium. Loss of balance of mind leads to inefficiency. Hence Karma Yoga ensures efficiency. Selfishness and profit-motive in work spread disharmony, each man trying to grab as much as possible, without realising that he is but inspiring his neighbour to follow his example and thus defeat his own purpose! The resultant disharmony in society is evident in the modern world where peace decreases as wealth increases. With the profit-motive out of the way, everyone learns to promote others' welfare, thus ensuring his own and everybody else's prosperity.

the consciousness that it holds up to man as the. ideal. One cannot get rid of evil and leave an inner vacuum. "Nature abhors a vacuum", and when one evil leaves, usually another, a subtler and more powerful one,
takes over. Wisdom lies in filling our consciousness with noble ideas and ideals, so that the baser ones are effortlessly ousted.

Krishna's is integral Yoga, though he calls it Buddhi Yoga. Buddhi is wisdom, intelligence, discrimination. Neither work, nor worship, nor practices as those described in the first section (which are also hinted at in the Bhagavad Gita), are of value unless they spring from and are guided and directed by wisdom. This wisdom should recognise the truth that—
(a) God pervades the whole universe within and without, i.e. He is Omni-present, He is One, He alone exists;
(b) The universe of apparent matter is His Nature or Body;

(c) The soul with its seeming independence is also part of His Nature, a cell in His Body; and
(d) The perception of distinction is caused by an inscrutable Illusory Power which is His, too, but from whose operation He can liberate us.

This wisdom, if it is valid, should be translated into action. God's Omnipresence should be meditated upon. The soul's identity with Him should be actively recognised by the humble surrender of selfish interests and by total freedom from fear, lust and anger, anxiety, tension and spiritual weakness. All evils flow from spiritual weakness. Weakness is the negation of God and is, therefroe, the worst of all blasphemies. The universe as the Body of God should compel Man to worship His Omnipresence by serving all beings. Having done all this, the Yogi should await the descent of Divine Grace which alone can bestow Cosmic Consciousness on him and liberate him from spiritual ignorance. He will then know that God, and God alone from within him works for and serves God, and God alone in every being on earth; for God and God alone exists.

(3) Bhakti Yoga:
The spirit of worshipfulness being the pivot around which Karma Yoga revolves, it is necessary to sample the act of worship and gradually cultivate a worshipful spirit. Moreover, it will not do to get fixed to the idea that the world and the individual are real. They are temporarily real, but when that phase is transcended, what then? In order to perceive the face behind the veil, the Yogi should acquire a new faculty. Human relationships evoke such spontaneous emotional concepts that it is harder to see God in the gambler than in a block or stone!

The sages who have given us the scientific love-approach to God were men of the highest wisdom who had perceived:—

(a) that love that exists in and flows from the heart of Man is but an indication of the nature of God that dwells in it ("God is Love" in the words of St. John) ;
(b) that this Love strays towards forms instead of flowing towards the Spirit, on account of the darkness of understanding that surrounds the soul; and
(c) that by systematic training of human emotions, their way-wardness could be controlled and Love that is God could once again identify itself.

Cosmie Consciousness which is the Consciousness of Cosmic Being or Existence or Oneness expresses itself as love. In reality Love is not two becoming one, but one regaining its wholeness. Man is made in the image of God, yet. mysteriously. the image assumes an independent status. The resolute denial of this unreal assumption forms the first part of Bhakti Yoga. Here the devotee feels that he is nothing and God and He alone is the Perfect Saviour. He bursts forth into hymns of self-pity and self-condemnation and calls upon God to redeem . him. World devotional literature is full of expressions that shock the sensibilities of the intellectual who psychoanalyses those expressions and sees in them the phantoms of his own ignor-' ance. When the devotee condemns himself, he is not injuring the Reality in him, but silencing the delirious chatter of the unreal.

At this stage of the devotee's life, the world. with its many "temptations" appears to him to be a big snare, a colourful death-trap that he should flee from. He shuns company and comforts not because he suffers from the martyr-complex, but he earnestly wants to get behind the veil of ignorance and break the mirror that brought the illusory individuality into being. This veil, this mirror, is responsible (so he feels) for the pleasuresense; hence by resisting the latter the former will be provoked to come into view. Company involves recognition of "others" and others exist only in the ignorance of the One Reality.

God is Real. The devotee feels it, though he is not established in the Reality. The world and the soul cannot also be real; and if they appear to be so, they must be phantoms fit only to be resisted and denied. Whereas the Karma Yogi begins by recognising the existence of the world, and of pain and suffering in it, which he endeavours to alleviate before raising his Conseiousness to World-as-Body-of-God, the devotee avoids it because it interferes with his love of God.

The soul is real, however, but its reality is dependent on God. It belongs to Him and therefore, its only business is to serve Him, love Him, depend on Him and surrender to Him. He is still not perceived as the Omni-indwelling Presence, for fear lest the Form should waylay the soul in quest of the Sprit.

Yet primarily to help the devotee focus his God-love, and also to enable him eventually to acquire the power to pierce the mask, the devotee is given "objects" of worship. These are the idols and images of God which are the externalised Indweller, as it were. They are never to be regarded as inert substances; and to ensure that the devotee recognises His Living Presence in them, devotional literature provides legends to clothe them with Life and History. These are the Puranas (literally "ancient literature") comparable in worth and truth to Greek and Roman mythology. Bhagavatham to which I have often referred earlier is a Purana. Whether the legends themselves are historically true or not is beside the point. their morals and philosophy are. In their light the images come to life.

The legends portray the incarnations of fiod (the devotee who is convinced of His Omnipotence has no difficulty in believing that He can so incarnate Himself) and the different attitudes in which people approached Him and attained Him. From these stories emerged techniques of God-love which in essence amounted to the transference of all earthly love to Him by regarding Him as child, Master, friend and lover. From these legends also emerged techniques of worship, the elaborate ritual which underlines the devotee's perception and recognition of the Living Presence in the image.

Love and concentration of mind gradually pierce the veil of matter that shrouds the omnipresent spirit and, whether we look upon it as a purely psychological phenomenon or as a revelation of the Truth, the devotee actually "sees" the Living God manifest in the image he is worshipping. The veil thus rent asunder disappears from other objects as well-men and women, animals and even plants appear to him as God-in-disguise. His former dread of the world disappears, for the world itself has vanished from his sight! He loves all, but not the many; it is the "all" that is God. This love is not a circumscribed personal emotional relationship that implies hatred, dislike or even indifference towards”other”, but it is radiance of one-ness. Love is to unity(in God) what light is to the lamp or the sun.

This goal is not reached in a day. External worship goes on for a long time. Then the ritual is kept but the altar is changed. The devotee is asked to build a temple in his heart, enshrine the Lord there and conduct the entire ritual within himself. This holds his attention and helps him cross the chasm of ignorance. At the last stage, the

devotee is asked to look upon the whole world as a small part of God and treat his whole life as Yoga. All the time he is reminded that he is only a humble servant of God and that his blessedness lay in completely surrendering himself to God and not even demanding liberation! In that surrender is the ego transcended, and the immature anxiety to attain liberation is detected as the work of the ego.

Scriptures remind the devotee again an again that God-realisation is the gift of God at His own will and pleasure. Scriptures also point out that God can truly be worshipped only if the devotee is godly, completely free from all impurities. God is not a whimsical being who loves some and hates others, but the devotee has to respond to that Love radiating incessantly from the centre. But let the devotee never forget that only when the iron is free from rust does the magnet attract it.

(4) Raja Yoga:
To the author of the Sutras that form the basis of this holy science, it is just Yoga. The adjective "Raja" (royal) was obviously added on to it by others. Bhakti and Raja Yoga have both got their own text-books, or rather handbooks which sum up the teachings in the form of laconic Sutras.

The Sutras are unique in their conception and construction. They are more like "aid ta memory" hints that students take during the course of a class lecture. Except with the help of a commentary, they are too brief to make much sense in themselves to any but the initiate.
Most of the schools of philosophical thought have their own Sutras (literally threads connecting pearls of thought).

Raja Yoga Sutras are attributed to Patanjali Maharshi who uses the philosophical basis of another system of Indian philosophy called the Sankhya (there were six of these). The latter laid great emphasis on knowledge of categories (Sankhya literally means number, or counting). The basic idea was that while the elements that constituted the world are real, relationships are unreal. While events take place in this world, their interpretation as pleasure and pain is false. A careful analysis of any object or experience will leave us without a category which we could call pleasure or pain.

Patanjali goes one step further and provides a ladder to enable every man to reach a super-conscious state where this realisation of the soul's eternal independence is possible. There are eight steps, and hence the science is also called Ashtanga Yoga.

As the Kathopanishad declares, neither vice nor virtue has anything to do with the Ultimate Reality or the Self. Yet vice is a denser form of ignorance and is capable of shutting the Self out of our view. Virtue, on the other hand, is transparent, though still a veil. These our letters—L, E, V, I, held the secret. Lift the veil, turn away from evil, thus will you live.

Evil, according to Yoga, is not dropped as an empty bottle is dropped from the hand. Evil is the inner psychic force wrongly directed; the force itself cannot be dropped. The right direction of this force is viture. When virtue is cultivated, evil cannot even exist. Persecuting evil itself will only compel it to change its mask. Hence Patanjali advocates the deliberate cultivation of positive virtues. Even when there is need to eradicate evils, the method should be to "practise the opposite-virtue".

Five cardinal virtues are specifically men-tioned:-
(a) Non-harming.
(b) Truthfulness.
(c) Non-stealing.
(d) Non-desiring of what belongs to others, and
(e) Continence or control of the mind and senses so that they move in God.

Five other disciplines are included in the second step.
These are:—
(a) Purity or cleanliness.
(b) Contentment.

(c) Austerity.
(d) Study of the scriptures, and
(e) Worship of and surrender to God.

These two-the first is Yama and the second Niyama-help the seeker in arresting the flow of psychic power in the wrong direction.

Body and mind are closely related to each other, and measures of control directed to one will act on the other. To a great extent a relaxed and still body will promote stillness and relaxation of the mind. This is the third step
—Asana or physical posture. Not the complicated Asanas or postures mentioned in Hatha Yoga, but the simple one of sitting comfortably and steadily for a considerable time.

Combined with this is the regulation of breath, Pranayama (literally "exercise of the life-force"). Prana is the life-force which activates the physical body at one end and the mind at the other. It is the link between body and mind. Its regulation and exercise, tharefore, promote physical health and mental equilibrium.

Only when the body is controlled (and forgotten!) and when the mind is in a state of equilibrium can the scattered rays of the mind be gathered together and focussed within to dispel the darkness of illusory entanglement of the soul in matter. Pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses and mind from flowing towards external objects and forging relationships with them is the next step. Patanjali is certain that. the previous step (Pranayama) itself is capable of achieving this introversion.

It is then only a matter of persistent practice. The withdrawn rays of the mind are focussed on itself in order that its reality or the reality of the Spirit that is its substratum may be. realised. Dharana (concentration), Dhyana: (meditation) and Samadhi (superconscious: vision) flow smoothly into one another and are in fact three phases of one event.

The process is complete. In the state of Samadhi the soul realises its eternal independence and unaffectedness by matter.

It is here that the Yogi realises that he cannot pull himself up by his own socks. He seeks the aid of Isvara (God). Patanjali's Isvara is or appears to be not the Eternal Infinite Absolute Existence, but an "extraordinary Soul" which is the Guru (literally one who removes the darkness of ignorance) of the-seeker and is capable of enabling the seeker to take the last leap into Self-realisation. OM, the mystic syllable of the Yogi, is used to invoke the Presence and assistance of Isvara.

The Yogi, thus liberated from self-imposed bondage, does not lead a life of isolation. but joyously plays his part in the world-drama. without getting attached to anything, nor desiring anything, nor even desiring to be spared the luxury of not taking part in the world's activities. Such a desire would amount to the wrong identification, on his part, of the Witness Consciousness that his spirit is, with the body and mind which alone act in accordance with His Will or past momentum or karma.

(5) Inana Yoga:

I would have loved to say-"And, finally we come to Jnana Yoga or the Path of Wisdom or the Path of Self-realisation". But that would be wrong. Lord Krishna emphasises again and again in the Bhagavad Gita that action or devotion not based on wisdom is but labour or emo tion (respectively). The mystic sitting in meditation must know what to expect and what to accept. Hence, Krishna styles the Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita as the Buddhi (Intelligent, Wise) Yoga.

Inana is of course slightly different. It is not activity of the intellect. Though we do not wish to be dogmatic about the impotence of the intellect and, as the agnostics might, sweep away all questions as irrelevant though on the contrary we do not pretend that the intellect can and should be made to solve the ultimate puzzle), we do feel that we should use the intellect correctly as far as we can go and then surrender it to intuition. Otherwise the surrender might be immature and barren. Again, if we persist in our dependence on the intellect, we might stop far short of the goal and accept the shadow. for the substance.

This Jnana is often classified into Paroksha Inana (indirect, others'-eye wisdom), and Aparoksha Jnana (direct, immediate, not-others'-eye wisdom). The former is acquired through books and teachers who are necessary, extremely essential and indispensable, but who can only lead us "thus far and no further", who can only place the manna of wisdom on the table. We should consume it, digest it and assimilate it. Then it becomes Aparoksha Jnana. In this world, to give a rather gross and crude illustration, the knowledge that Mr. So-and-so is a man is indirect knowledge, and the knowledge "I am a man" is direct knowledge. Indirect knowledge is knowledge-by-acquaint-ance, but direct knowledge is knowldge-by-identity.

However much we argue in favour of free-thinking, it is saner to admit that this freedom is always conditioned by tuition, consciously or unconsciously received. Even the very concept of free-thinking is a certain type of condition-ing! The Prophet of Free-thinking usually speaks with his tongue in his cheek, for his mission is a failure in any case! If the people whom he is addressing free-think and reject his case, he is lost. If they accept his thesis and follow him, he is lost, too, for they have rejected his teaching already!

In the Inner World of the Spirit, the Guru is extremely essential, in fact indispensable. He is the remover of spiritual darkness. He is the Light of God; hence regarded by the disciple as God Himself. The seeker approachs the Guru in all humility; That is the only attitude in which reception of the spiritual truth is at all possible. He receives the spiritual truth as imparted to him by the teacher. If he rejects it offhand the loss is his and he might as well have not gone to the teacher at all.

The first step is Sravana (hearing).

It is not acceptance yet. It is like the lunch laid out on the table, not yet served. It will not: appease anyone's hunger

.

The second step is Manana (reflection).

Here the teaching is chewed and digested. The disciple has to do this, either alone by himself or in company with other seekers.

The third step is Nidhidhyasana (contemplation).

Here the teaching is assimilated. It is equal to the Samadhi of Raja Yoga. There is enlightenment. The lunch is no longer food on the table, nor chyme in the stomach but the fleshing at here, and that is why intellectual understanding of spiritual truths is so barren and useless.

It is the ruggedness of this path that prompted the sages who designated it to lay down the qualifications of the seekers who could pursue it. They are four:—

(a) Viveka or discrimination between the Real and the unreal; which should not only be a profession, but must be prac-tised as—
(b) Dispassion, being a total absence of longing for sensual pleasures, which should blossom as—
(c) Sixfold virtues, viz.:—

Sama (control of the mind).
Dama (control of the senses).
Titiksha (endurance).
Uparati (unworldliness).
Shraddha (faith in God, Guru and one's own Self).
Samadhana (equilibrium of mind).
All of which should be based on:-

(d) Mumukshutwa /keen desire for liberation from ignorance).

The aspirant who is endowed with thesa qualifications is benefited when he approaches the Master. Enlightenment is dependent entirely on the intensity of the disciple's application.

Further procedure is entirely individualistic. It may take the form of a dialogue or discourse. The Guru may adopt one of many methods of leading the disciple to ultimate Enlightenment. Apart from the Guru-disciple co-operation, it is ultimately the Lord who bestows Enlightenment on the seeker. One of our greatest sages has said so very plainly:—

"Even the desire to realise the Self arises in a man only on account of the Grace of God".

The Self cannot transcend itself. It is the Supreme Being alone that enables the seeker to cross the ocean of ignorance.

When one studies the scriptures dealing with the behaviour of a sage of Self-realisation, one is wonderstruck at the keenness with which each serves humanity. They are not hewers of wood and drawers of water; they may not bake bread or sell vegetables, but they do engage themselves deeply in spiritual activities. The world

is not only populated by hewers and drawers, bakers and sellers. Sages do what is most natural to them, that for which they are specially qualified –-spiritual ministry. What is note-worthy, however, is that they are never idle. The world-unconscious state of a few great ones described here and there in the scriptures is intended only to show that they are no longer bound to any ordinary pattern of conduct. That should not confuse us in our recognition of the dynamic sages.

Our own Master, Swami Sivananda, refused to let his worn-out body rest till it was laid to rest, after the breath had stopped. He combined all the Yogic practices in his life and insisted that all seekers should do so. One is puzzled how this could be, for the philosophical bases of one path seem to contradict those of others! This raradox is resolved beautifully by hanuman, the great servent of lord Rama, who addressing the Lord says:—

"Rama, when I am body-conscious I am your servant; when I am conscious of my identity as an individual soul, I am part of you; but when I lose these and realise I am the Self, I am You."

Wisdom lies in combining all the Yogas described here in order that there can be integral perfection and divinisation of the entire being.

The worshipper of God is promised salvation or liberation in course of time after dwelling for a long period in the particular Heaven to which his devotion has qualified him. The good man goes to heaven and returns, but one who has realised the significance of the great Truth-
"Tat Tvam Asi" (That thou art you are not the body, mind and senses, but the Immorta!, Infinite Absolute Being) —is liberated here and now.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing is but a glimpse at the Ancient Religion. I would prefer to regard its theoretical aspect as Dharma, an enquiry into "that which upholds" and its operative part as Yoga "that which unites the soul with God" and liberates him even from that which holds.

Orthodoxy is often conservative. Vested interests resist any attempt on anyone's part te question orthodoxy. My Master Swami Sivananda was rooted in the Ancient Religion, but grew out of the limitations imposed upon it by orthodoxy. He often commanded us to reinterpret it in the new light of modern science, iri modern language, against the backdrop of modern philosophical thinking.

Truth is courage. The Himalayas are not scared of gales! The Ancient Religion is Truth itself. Science is its ally. Logle is its path. Philosophy and psychology are its vehicles. Legends and idols, traditions and superstitions, are its rifles and guns. Yoga is its ammunition.
enemies who hide in the fortress of spiritual ignorance. This fortress has to be stormed and the enemies destroyed. That is its goal. Yes. that is the goal of any religion!

That is what krishna thought. That is what Christ taught. Were they two individual who entertained identical thoughts? Maybe. Or, were "they" a single person? The conviction is growing upon me that the answer to this is in the affirmative. The similarity of the Names (Krishna and Christ) and the almost identical biographies convince me that the Prophet of Modern Hinduism, Sri Krishna, and the Prophet of Nazareth, desus the Christ, are not two distinct personalities but a single individual who spent part of His Life in the Middle East and part of it in India. This Divinity clearly proclaimed that He had come not to destroy but to fulfil, to carry out a spring cleaning, to restore the spirit of true religion to the human heart and to reestablish righteousness, peace on earth and goodwill amongst mankind.

It is a tragedy too deep for tears that having split this Personality into two, mankind divides itself into two camps-the East and the West-pushing each other perilously close to utter destruction. Look at the globe. Take a second look. Turn it on its axis. Where is East and where is West?

Oh no. East is not east, nor is West west! The world is divided as creation has always been into the two camps of "The Forces of Light" and "The Forces of Darkness". The spiritual and the material. Even this Eternal Conflict is essential to the

unfoldment of the Divine in Man. The spirit will triumph, whatever be the odds it has to contend with.

The challenge of materialism is understandable and even necessary. But conflict within the ranks of religion is disgraceful; though I am certain that the elements that create and promote this conflict are totally irreligious and are the enemies of religion planted in the religious ranks by "The Forces of Darkness". It is time that the Forces of Light awoke to these fifth column activities and resolutely dismissed these internal enemies.

Religion alone can unite mankind; for that is what it implies. That which separates man from man is irreligion whatever be its camouflage. Religion leads to understanding. Understanding (standing under) is superior to tolerance and even to love. Tolerance suggests an air of superiority; love, of equality with "the other man". But understanding looks up in profound and genuine admiration, in recognition of the incontrovertible fact that God dwells in all.

"Truth is one. God is one. Religion is one. Mankind is one"-said my Master.

Religion leads us to the goal of direct realisation of this truth. Our ignorance does not cancel the truth! Hence, the Indian is unconcerned with the acceptance or rejection of his viewpoint. There are many who do not accept the theories of Karma and those of reincarnation (set out in Chapters XXI and XXII): Well, never mind; so long as you are good and you do good and recognise the existence of an Omnipresent God Whom you endeavour to realise, all is well. You may or may not believe in the need for the use of images and idols; but you are free to arrive at the goal in any way you like, suited to your temperament! There is no compulsion in religion; and that is exactly what the Holy Quran demands.

Religion reveals to us an Indwelling Spirit that is distinct from the body and an Omnipresence of which this world is but a tiny particle. The former generates courage in us and the latter generates compassion. Equipped with these we should eschew selfish desire and serve all mankind with the love of the Omnipresent God.

That is the urgent need of the hour, if humanity is to avoid self-destruction. Mankind is perched precariously on the cliff of nuclear destruction. There is no time to loose. Contemplation of the Omnipresence of God and the realisation that even this material world is but the Body of God in Which all beings are one (which is the common basis of all religions) alone can save mankind.

May His Light illumine your heart and soul!

OM TAT SAT